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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN WITHERSPOON, D. D. L. L. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE AT PRINCETON,

NEW-JERSEY.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

An Account of the Author's Life, in a Sermon occasioned by his Death,

BY THE REV. DR. JOHN RODGERS,

OF NEW-YORK.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.——VOL. II.

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THE OBJECT OF A CHRISTIAN's DESIRE IN RELIGIOUS WORSHIP.

SERMON 17.

EXODUS xxxiii. 18.

And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy Glory.

THESE are the words of an Old Teſtament Saint; of that Moſes, who, as a ſervant, was faithful over all the houſe of God. True piety is the ſame in ſubſtance in all ages, and points at one thing as its centre and its reſt, the knowledge and enjoyment of God. In the preceding verſes, Moſes had been employed in earneſt prayer and interceſſion for the people of Iſrael. He had met with ſucceſs and acceptance in theſe requeſts; for it is ſaid, in the 14th verſe, "My preſence ſhall go with thee, and I "will give thee reſt." And in the 17th, "And the Lord "ſaid unto Moſes, I will do this thing alſo that thou haſt "ſpoken; for thou haſt found grace in my ſight, and I "know thee by name." The condeſcenſion of a gracious God, though it ſatisfies, does not extinguiſh the deſires of his ſaints, but rather makes them more ardent and importunate; for he immediately adds, in the words of the text, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.* It is highly probable, from what follows, that this deſire included more than was proper for the preſent ſtate; yet ſuch a diſcovery as was poſſible, or could be uſeful to him, is graciouſly

promiſed, " And he ſaid, I will make all my goodneſs paſs " before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the Lord " before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be " gracious, and will ſhew mercy on whom I will ſhew " mercy."

My dear brethren, it is our diſtinguiſhed privilege, that we have daily unmoleſted acceſs to the houſe and ordinances of God. We ought to rejoice, that we have ſo many clear and expreſs promiſes of the divine preſence, in New Teſtament worſhip. But what cauſe have we to be aſhamed, that we are ſo exceeding prone to ſtop ſhort in the thereſhold, to content ourſelves with the mere form, inſtead of earneſtly breathing after real, inward, and ſenſible communion with God? I have therefore choſen this ſubject, in the view of that ſolemn ordinance, *The Lord's Supper*, where we have a ſenſible repreſentation of Chriſt crucified, the great mean of our acceſs to God, that we may ſerve him on that occaſion particularly, and the remaining part of our lives habitually, in ſpirit and in truth. And, Oh, that we may have daily more experience of the ſweetneſs and benefit of his ſervice on earth! and may daily long more for that time, when we ſhall ſerve him in a manner infinitely more perfect and joyful in his temple above!

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, I propoſe, in dependance on divine ſtrength.

I. To explain what is the object of a ſaint's deſire, when he ſaith in the words of Moſes, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory*.

II. To improve the ſubject—particularly by pointing out what is the moſt proper preparation for ſuch a diſcovery.

I. Then, I am to explain what is the object of a ſaint's deſire, when he ſaith, in the words of Moſes, *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory*. It is very probable, from the paſſage following the text, which I have read, that Moſes had ſome regard to the ſenſible appearance, which, in that diſpenſation, did often accompany or notify the immediate preſence of the angel of the covenant. He deſired,

probably, to be ſtrengthened for beholding ſtedfaſtly the Shechinach, or bright and luminous cloud which ſometimes appeared over the tabernacle, and, by its glorious luſtre, tended to affect the mind with a ſenſe of the power and ſovereignty of the Lord Jehovah. But this, ſurely, was not all; for this, in itſelf, was only a ſubſidiary mean which ſerved to carry their views to the real and ſpiritual glory of God. To the laſt therefore, we ſhall confine our attention, as to what the goſpel particularly opens to us, and what believers are enabled, by faith, to apprehend.

When Chriſtians, then, deſire to ſee the glory of God, it ſeems chiefly to imply the following things: 1. They deſire to ſee the glory of an eternal independent God; they deſire to ſee the only living and true God in his own inherent excellence and infinite perfection. God is the ſource and ſum of all excellence; or, in the language of the Pſalmiſt, "the perfection of beauty." Every thing noble or beautiful in the creature, is only a faint ray from the fulneſs of the Creator's glory. Therefore he is the proper object of the higheſt eſteem, and moſt profound veneration, of every reaſonable creature. The viſion and fruition of God conſtitute the employment and happineſs of heaven: and even here, while they are in preparation for the higher houſe, the ſaints deſire ſuch a diſcovery of the divine glory as their condition will admit of, and take pleaſure in contemplating his nature, as revealed to them both in his word and in his works. They dwell with adoring wonder, on all his attributes, which are boundleſs and unſearchable: the immenſity of his being, who fills heaven and earth with his preſence, who ſeeth in ſecret, and from whom the thickeſt darkneſs cannot cover us; his irreſiſtible power, "who ſpake, and it was done, who "commanded, and it ſtood faſt;"—who called this great univerſe out of nothing into being, "who doth in the army "of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth what-"ever ſeems good unto him:" his infinite holineſs and purity, "with whom evil cannot dwell, nor ſinners ſtand "in his preſence; who looketh to the moon, and it ſhineth "not, to the ſtars, and they are not pure in his ſight:" his infinite wiſdom, "who worketh all things according

" to his will, who bringeth the counsel of the heathen to " nought, and makes the devices of the people of none " effect :" his boundless goodness, which fills the earth, and flows in plenteous streams to all the creatures of his power.

But, perhaps, some are saying, what is there extraordinary or peculiar in all this ? is it not clearly revealed in the word of God ? can any Christian be ignorant of it ? If Moses, in that early dispensation, desired a discovery of the divine perfections, nothing of that kind is wanting to us, who, since the fulness of time, have so complete a revelation in the New Testament. But, my brethren, I must beg of you to observe these two things :

1. That there is in the fulness of the Godhead an infinite and endless variety even for the employment of our intellectual powers. Well might Zophar, in the book of Job, say, Job xi. 7, 8, 9, " Canst thou, by searching, find " out God ? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfec- " tion ? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do ? " deeper than hell, what canst thou know ? the measure " thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the " sea."

2. That the real and proper knowledge of the glory of God is by inward and spiritual illumination. The holy Scriptures themselves, however clear a discovery they contain of the nature of God, are no better than a sealed book to many even of the greatest comprehension of mind. It is one thing to think, and speak, and reason on the perfections of God, as an object of science, and another to glorify him as God, or to have a deep and awful impression of him upon our hearts. Real believers will know this by experience. A discovery of the glory of God, is not to inform them of a truth which they never heard before, but to give lively penetrating views of the meaning and importance of those truths of which they had, perhaps, heard and spoken times without number. Sometimes one word spoken of the Eternal, the Almighty, the Holy One, will be carried home upon the conscience and heart with such irresistible force, as to shew them more of God than ever they had seen before. O what a difference is there between

the way in which we uſe the ſame words in prayer or praiſe, at one time, and at another! None but downright atheiſts will deny the omniſcience and omnipreſence of God; but how far is this general acknowledgment from that overwhelming ſenſe of his preſence which believers have ſometimes in his worſhip in public or in ſecret. What a new ſenſe of God's preſence had Jacob at Bethel, when he ſaid, Gen. xxviii. 16, 17, "Surely the Lord is "in this place, and I knew it not: and he was afraid, "and ſaid, how dreadful is this place? this is none other "but the houſe of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" What a ſenſe of God's preſence had Hagar, Gen. xvi. 13, when "ſhe called the name of the Lord that ſpake unto "her, thou, God ſeeſt me; for, ſhe ſaid, have I alſo here "looked after him that ſeeth me?" or Job when he expreſſes himſelf thus, Job xlii. 5, 6, "I have heard of thee "by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. "Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes?"

I ſhall only further obſerve, that it plainly appears that this diſcovery of the glory of God, belongs only to his own people. Wicked men are ſaid, in ſcripture, to be ſuch as know not God. They are alſo deſcribed a little differently, as not having God in all their thoughts; not but that wicked men may have a general or cuſtomary belief, in the being and perfections of God, but becauſe they have not that intimate ſenſe of his preſence, that diſcovery of the glory and amiableneſs of his perfections, which is peculiar to his own children. Even the natural perfections of God, his power and wiſdom, cannot be beheld with ſuch veneration by any, as by thoſe who are ſenſible of their obligations to ſerve him. But above all, the glory of his infinite holineſs and juſtice can never be ſeen, but by thoſe who deſire to ſubmit to it; nor the glory of his infinite mercy, but by thoſe who ſee themſelves indebted to it. This leads me to obſerve,

2. That the believer deſires to ſee the glory of a gracious and reconciled God, not only infinitely glorious in himſelf, but infinitely merciful to him. This view ought never to be ſeparated from the former. Take away the divine mercy, and the luſtre of his other perfections is too

ſtrong for us to behold. The power, wiſdom, holineſs and juſtice of God, ſeparated from his mercy, ſpeak nothing but unmixed terror to the guilty. It is very probable, that there was ſomething in the deſire of Moſes, in the text, according to his own view, ignorant and unadviſed; but God granted his requeſt only in ſuch a way as could be uſeful to him. When he ſays, *I beseech thee shew me thy glory*, the anſwer is in the following terms, "I will make all "my goodneſs paſs before thee; and I will proclaim the "name of the Lord before thee. And I will be gracious "to whom I will be gracious, and will ſhew mercy on "whom I will ſhew mercy." And again, it is ſaid in the following chapter, 6, 7, verſes, "And the Lord paſſed by "before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, "merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering and abundant in "goodneſs and truth. Keeping mercy for thouſands, "forgiving iniquity, and tranſgreſſion, and ſin: and that "will by no means clear the guilty, viſiting the iniquity of "the fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens "children, unto the third and fourth generation."

We may alſo ſee, that in the whole diſpenſation of divine grace to men, God is repreſented as coming under a peculiar relation to them; and they are called not only to ſerve him as God, but to truſt in him as their God. Every hearer muſt be ſenſible, how eſſential this is to a believer's deſire, of ſeeing the glory of God. He cannot conſider him as God over-all, without, at the ſame time, remembering, that he is one with whom he hath to do. There is alſo a neceſſity here peculiar to ourſelves. The holy angels conſider him as their Maker and their happineſs: but the children of Adam muſt conſider, not only his goodneſs to the innocent, but his mercy to the guilty. This glory of God ſhines brightly, and ſhines only in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. God we are told, "dwelleth in light "which no man can approach unto. No man hath ſeen "God at any time; but the only begotten of the Father, "he hath declared him." In this wonderful diſpenſation, indeed, all the perfections of God are found united; but above all, "Grace and mercy ſhine and reign through "righteouſneſs, by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Here I muſt add, that the believer not only deſires to ſee the glory of God's mercy, in general, as diſplayed in the goſpel, in which he may have a ſhare, but to take an appropriating view of it, as what he hath a clear right and title to call his own. Doubtleſs the mercy of God is publiſhed, offering ſalvation to the chief of ſinners. It is their duty to accept of it; it is their intereſt to cleave to it. But they are many times deterred by what they ſee in God, they are many times diſcouraged by what they feel in themſelves, and are afraid to aſſert their title to ſo great a bleſſing. But when, by the Holy Spirit, they are enabled to ſee the infinite price paid for their redemption, in the croſs of Chriſt; when they ſee the riches of divine grace, in the croſs Chriſt; when they hear the urgent invitations to them to believe in the croſs of Chriſt; when they are enabled freely to renounce and quit hold of every other claim; when their hearts are ſweetly conſtrained by the bonds of their Redeemer's love; they can then look upon God as their reconciled Father, through him who hath made peace, by the blood of his croſs, and ſay unto him, *My Lord! and my God!* What an endearing view is this of the divine glory, and what ineffable ſatisfaction ſprings from it, to the ſoul? What an unſpeakable conſolation to thoſe who have been wounded in their ſpirits, and grieved in their minds, when they are enabled to apply the encouraging promiſes of the holy ſcriptures? Iſa. i. 18. "Come, now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith "the Lord; though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be "as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, "they ſhall be as wool. Iſa. xliii. 25. I, even I, am he "that blotteth out thy tranſgreſſions, for mine own ſake; "and will not remember thy ſins, xliv. 22. I have blot-"ted out as a thick cloud, thy tranſgreſſions, and as a "cloud thy ſins. Return unto me, for I have redeemed "thee."

3. The believer deſires to ſee the glory of God, as an all-ſufficient God. This is a neceſſary view of God, as the ſupport and happineſs of the creature, as well as the ſtrength and conſolation of the ſinner.

My brethren, man was made for living upon God; forgetting this, he firſt went aſtray from him. Self-ſufficiency, and a deluſive ſenſe of independence, is inſeparable from a ſinful ſtate. Conviction levels a blow at the foundation of this miſtake. Serious conſideration ſhews us how inſufficient we are for our own happineſs. Daily experience diſcovers the inherent vanity of all created comforts in themſelves, and as ſeparated from God. When the penitent returns to God, he not only returns from the ſervice of other maſters, to him, as his rightful Lord; but forſakes all forbidden joys, and cleaves to God as his happineſs, and reſts in him as his portion. Does not this appear from the uniform language of ſcripture, with regard to both parts of the covenant? what belongs to God, and what belongs to man. See the tenor of an early promiſe to the father of the faithful, Gen. xv. 1. "Fear not "Abram; I am thy ſhield, and thy exceeding great re- "ward." Multitudes of others are of the ſame import.

The power and providence of God, in behalf of his people, are largely and beautifully deſcribed in the ninety-firſt Pſalm, "He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the Moſt "High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I "will ſay of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortreſs; "my God, in him will I truſt. Surely he ſhall deliver "thee from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome "peſtilence. He ſhall cover thee with his feathers, and "under his wings ſhalt thou truſt. His truth ſhall be thy "ſhield and buckler," &c. 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Wherefore "come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith "the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will re- "ceive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye ſhall be "my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty." On the other hand, the invitation, or exhortation to return, is ordinarily preſſed from the profit of the change, Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirſteth! come ye to the waters; "and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea "come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without "price." And, to name no more paſſages, when God came to eſtabliſh the faith of Abraham in his promiſe, he ſays, Gen. xvii. 1, "I am the Almighty," or as it ought

to be tranſlated, "the all-ſufficient God: walk before me, "and be thou perfect." Now, believers deſire to ſee the glory of God, as all-ſufficient; and all diſcoveries of this nature are attended with unſpeakable complacence and ſatisfaction. They ſee the glory of an infinite God as theirs, and rejoice in the richneſs of their portion. Wearied with repeated diſappointments, and deeply convinced of the vanity of the creature, they reſt in him, as able to give them complete happineſs; happineſs that will never change! happineſs that will never be exhauſted: He that hath choſen God as his portion, hath, as our Saviour beautifully expreſſeth it, made "choice of that good part, which "cannot be taken away from him."

My brethren, we are now come to the very ſubſtance of practical religion. The glory of an all-ſufficient God, appears as more than a balance to all that pretends to rival him in our affections; to all that we are called to give up for his ſake. When the believer ſees the fulneſs of God, then his anxiety, and diſtreſſing fears, of every kind, are at an end. Does he want proviſion? "The earth is "the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof. The young lions "do lack and ſuffer hunger; but they that ſeek the Lord, "ſhall not want any good thing." Does he want friends? God is able to make his enemies to be at peace with him. Does he want any outward comfort? God is able to procure it, or make him happy without it. Not to mention particulars; the triumph of faith, in this view, is to attain an abſolute and unconditional reſignation to the will of God, with a firm perſuaſion, that he is able to make all things work together for our good, and willing to beſtow every thing that is for our real intereſt. It is to ſay with the prophet, Hab. iii. 17, "Although the fig tree ſhall "not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines, the labor "of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; "the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall "be no herd in the ſtalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord; "I will joy in the God of my ſalvation."

I ſhall only add, that the divine all-ſufficiency is to be conſidered, as regarding our ſanctification as well as comfort. What diſtreſs does not the Chriſtian often ſuffer

from the treachery of his own heart, and from the power of ſurrounding temptations? Covered with ſhame for his paſt unſteadfaſtneſs, convinced, by experience, of his own weakneſs, he hath no other refuge but in God. And what courage does he derive from the fulneſs of divine perfection, the greatneſs of divine power, and the faithfulneſs of the divine promiſe? "My grace ſhall be ſufficient for "thee, and my ſtrength ſhall be made perfect in weak-"neſs." He then ſays, with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxi. 16, "I will go in the ſtrength of the Lord God: I will make "mention of thy righteouſneſs, even of thine only."

II. I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And, 1ſt, Let us admire the divine condeſcenſion, in admitting his ſaints to a diſcovery of his glory. Solomon ſays, with very great propriety, in the language of aſtoniſhment: "But "will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" The ſame ought to be, nay, the ſame certainly are, the ſentiments of every real believer. But let us remember what has been hinted at above, that our acceſs to God, and our communion with him, is, and only can be, through the Mediator of the new covenant, in whom we have acceſs, by faith, unto God.

2dly, Let me beſeech you to try yourſelves, whether this ever hath been your attainment, and whether it is your ſincere deſire? Do you know, in any meaſure, what it is to ſee the glory of the true God? Hath he appeared before you in terrible majeſty? Have your very ſouls been made to bow down before him, and to give him the glory that is juſtly due to his name? Have you ſeen the glory of a reconciled God? Have you choſen him, in Chriſt, as your portion? Have you devoted yourſelves, without reſerve, to his diſpoſal? Again, have you ſeen the glory of an all-ſufficient God? Surely I ſpeak to many who have ſeen the vanity of the creature. Probably you have taſted a little of the ſufferings of a ſinful ſtate. Where did you ſeek your conſolation? where do you find your ſupport? Have you learned the holy and happy art of pouring out your ſouls to God? Have you felt the

ſweetneſs of it? And have you ſaid, with the Pſalmiſt, "Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul! for the Lord hath "dealt bountifully with thee? Is it your earneſt deſire to ſee the glory of God? Can you ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxiii. 1, 2, "O God! thou art my God, early will "I ſeek thee: my ſoul thirſteth for thee; my fleſh longeth "for thee in a dry and thirſty land where no water is, to "ſee thy power and thy glory, ſo as I have ſeen thee in "the ſanctuary."

3dly, I will now proceed to exhort you, in the moſt earneſt manner, to diligence in ſeeking after real communion with God in his inſtituted worſhip. How highly are we favored with light and liberty? how little are many ſenſible of their privileges? I have often, on ſuch occaſions, put you in mind of the fatal effects of a heartleſs, cuſtomary, formal worſhip; it is provoking to God, pernicious to others, hardening to the heart, and ruining to the ſoul. Were but a ſociety of thoſe Proteſtants abroad, who are lying under perſecution, to enjoy the ſeaſon which we now enjoy, what an edge would be upon their ſpirits? what a ſenſe of gratitude in their hearts? what fire and zeal in their affections? Strange, indeed, that public proſperity ſhould be ſo ſtupifying, and the approach of eternity to every individual ſhould not be awakening; while the young and ſtrong are hurried off the ſtage, while every day is bringing us nearer to our laſt, while every ordinance is adding to our charge, that we ſhould not deſire to ſee the glory of God in his ſanctuary here, that it may be the earneſt of our future inheritance, and prepare us for his immediate preſence hereafter.

Suffer me to ſpeak a few words to thoſe that are young. God is my witneſs, that their welfare is at my heart. Perhaps you will think, what hath been ſaid hardly applicable to you. The deſire of Moſes, the man of God, intimate communion and fellowſhip with God, the attainment of ripe and experienced Chriſtians, all this you will ſay, is unſuitable to me: nay, perhaps, by a baſtard humility, you will ſay, to expect it, would be preſumption in me. But you are greatly deceived: there are none who have more gracious invitations to come unto God than young

ſinners: there are none who have greater reaſon to expect nearneſs to God than young ſaints. Do you not read, that God revealed himſelf to Samuel, the child, when he neglected Eli, the old prophet? Beſides, I would recommend earneſtneſs and affection to you; not only for your greater profit, but to prevent your apoſtaſy. A little religion is very hard to hold; it is like a lamp which is hardly lighted, which the leaſt breath of wind will extinguiſh, or a tree that is but newly planted, which a rude thruſt will overturn. Unleſs you make God and his ſervice, your hearty choice, you will not carry it long as your burden, but will be ſoon tempted to throw it down. Be concerned, therefore, I beſeech you, to attend on his inſtituted worſhip, not in a careleſs and formal manner, but let the "deſire of your ſouls be to his name, and the re-"membrance of him."

I ſhall now conclude the ſubject, by offering to thoſe, who would ſee the glory of God, a few directions, as to the beſt preparation for ſuch a diſcovery. 1ſt, If you would ſee the glory of God in his ſanctuary, be ſerious in ſelf-examination, and in the renunciation of all known ſin. Holineſs is an eſſential attribute of the divine nature; and, therefore, he muſt be worſhipped in the beauty of holineſs. Thus the Pſalmiſt reſolved with himſelf, Pſal. xxvi. 6. "I will waſh mine hands in innocence, ſo will I com-"paſs thine altar, O Lord!" It is true, none, who have any knowledge of the corruption of their own hearts, can reaſonably hope to be perfectly free from ſin in the preſent life: yet a real Chriſtian will have it, as the object of his daily ſtudy, to "cleanſe himſelf from all filthineſs of the "fleſh and ſpirit, that he may perfect holineſs in the fear "of God." It was ſin that firſt rendered us unfit for communion with God; and therefore, our recovery of this happy privilege will be but in proportion to our ſanctification. To bring ſinful diſpoſitions, indulged, and ſtill ſuffered in the heart, to the worſhip of God, and to expect acceptance in ſuch a ſtate, is implied blaſphemy, and the greateſt diſhonor we can poſſibly do to him.

2. In order to ſee the glory of God, you muſt be cloathed with humility. No diſpoſition more eſſentially neceſſa-

ry to a Chriſtian at all times, but more eſpecially, when he makes an immediate approach to God in his worſhip: Iſa. lxvi. 2. "For all thoſe things hath mine hand made: "and all thoſe things have been, ſaith the Lord: but to "this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of "a contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word." And, indeed, how can we conſider the nature of that God whom we worſhip, and our own ſinful and miſerable eſtate, without being ſtruck with a ſenſe of the neceſſity of deep humility and ſelf-abaſement in our intercourſe with him? It is particularly to be noticed, that ſelf-abaſement, and even ſelf-abhorrence, is the immediate effect of a ſenſe of the divine preſence. See to this purpoſe, Iſa. vi. 1,—5. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I ſaw alſo the Lord "ſitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train "filled the temple: above it ſtood the ſeraphims: each "one had ſix wings: with twain he covered his face, and "with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did "fly. And one cried unto another, and ſaid Holy, holy, "holy is the Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his "glory! And the poſts of the door moved at the voice "of him that cried, and the houſe was filled with ſmoke. "Then ſaid I, Wo is me; for I am undone, becauſe I "am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of "a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have ſeen the "King, the Lord of hoſts!" See alſo Job xlii. 5, 6. "I "have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now "mine eye ſeeth thee: wherefore I abhor myſelf, and re-"pent in duſt and aſhes." Let us endeavor, therefore, to be truly and inwardly humble. Let us remember the grace of redemption, what guilty criminals we were, before unmerited mercy and ſovereign love found out a way for our recovery. Happy they, where humility ariſes from a real exerciſe of ſoul! How difficult, how rare a thing, is true humility? How eaſy is it to uſe modeſt and ſubmiſſive expreſſions, compared to attaining a truly humble and mortified ſtate of mind? May almighty God, by his power, make us humble; and do thou, O bleſſed Jeſus! "caſt down every high thought, and lofty imagina-"tion, that exalteth itſelf againſt thee."

3. In the laſt place; if you deſire to ſee the glory of God, be fervent in preparatory prayer: if there is any bleſſing that requires importunity and wreſtling with God, ſurely this high and happy privilege of communion with him in his houſe muſt be of that kind. And I think, we are warranted to ſay, that, in the divine government, there are ſome bleſſings that require more importunity than others. See a remarkable paſſage, Mark ix. 28, 29. "And when he was come into the houſe, his diſciples "aſked him privately, why could not we caſt him out? "and he ſaid unto them, this kind can come forth by no-"thing, but by prayer and faſting." If ſome devils were ſo obſtinate in their poſſeſſion, that the ſame degree of faith and fervor which prevailed over others, could not caſt them out, muſt not the ſame thing hold, from analogy, with reſpect to other mercies? And how juſtly are indifferent, luke-warm worſhippers denied that bleſſing which they ſo lightly eſteem? Let me therefore, earneſtly, beſeech every ſerious perſon not to reſtrain prayer before God, but to repeat and urge the plea, that he would be graciouſly preſent with us; that he would pour down his Spirit from on high, and make us to know, to our happy experience, "that a day in his courts is better than a "thouſand; and that it is better to be door-keepers in the "houſe of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedneſs."

THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN HIS HUMILIATION.

SERMON 18.

Iſaiah lxiii. 1. ſecond clauſe.

——*This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his ſtrength?*

MY brethren, all the works of God are great and marvellous, worthy of the attention and admiration of his rational creatures. The contemplation of what is now revealed of him, is the nobleſt employment of which we are capable in this world: and the more clear and enlarged contemplation of him ſhall be our employment and happineſs in the world above. But of all the works of God, there is none in which his perfections are ſo ſignally diſplayed, as in the redemption of an elect world through Jeſus Chriſt. All other views of his glory are faint and fading in compariſon of this. However much we are called to adore the power and wiſdom of Creation, or the goodneſs and bounty of Providence, our praiſes are extremely defective, if we omit that new ſong which he hath put into our mouths, even praiſe to our God for his unſpeakable gift.

Redeeming love, my brethren, is the immediate object of our attention in the holy ordinance of the Lord's ſupper. Here is a ſymbolical repreſentation of it, that faith may be ſtrengthened by the aid of ſenſe. I hope, therefore, it will not be improper, by way of preparation for it, to take a view of the glory of our Redeemer's character, whoſe ſufferings we are now to commemorate. As ſal-

vation is an agreeable ſound, ſo the name of a Saviour is a delightful name to every believer. I may therefore ſafely preſume upon the attention of all ſuch at leaſt, while I endeavor to ſet him before you, as he is repreſented in the ſtrong and forcible language of the text, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?* Such a theme will be the moſt proper introduction to the work of this day; that, as we are to commemorate Chriſt's ſufferings as an extraordinary event, he is here ſpoken of, and his appearance inquired into, in words of aſtoniſhment and admiration: *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah! this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength!* I ſhall not ſpend time in aſſigning the reaſons why interpreters generally apply theſe words to Chriſt, but only obſerve, that, on this ſuppoſition, they contain a mixed repreſentation of glory and ſuffering, of ſtrength and abaſement, which is the very ſubſtance and meaning of a Saviour on the croſs.

Agreeably to this, the ſingle point I have in view, in the preſent diſcourſe, is, through Divine aſſiſtance, to point out to you, in what reſpects the glory of our Redeemer was apparent even in his ſufferings, and ſhone through even the dark cloud that covered him in his humiliation, or in the language of the text, how he might be ſaid, *to travel in the greatness of his strength:* and then I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I. I am to point out to you, in what reſpects the glory of our Redeemer was apparent even in his ſufferings, and ſhone through even the dark cloud that covered him in his humiliation. As the love of God to man, in providing redemption for him, was inconceivable, ſo the mean which he employed, in accompliſhing this great work, was equally aſtoniſhing. That his eternal and well-beloved Son ſhould veil his divine glory, clothe himſelf with human fleſh, ſubject himſelf to a life of pain and ſuffering, and at laſt make his ſoul an offering for ſin upon a croſs—This, as it was not after the manner of men, nor bore

upon it any of the marks of human wiſdom, as it was deſigned and doth tend, to abaſe the pride of man, and exalt the grace of God; ſo it is with difficulty that man can be brought to an approbation of it. "The croſs of Chriſt "was to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks "fooliſhneſs." It is therefore proper, that when we are to commemorate the incarnation and death of our Redeemer, we ſhould attend to theſe evidences of his divine glory that ſtill appeared even in his loweſt abaſement. By this means, while we grieve for the ſufferings that ſin brought upon him, we may ſtill triumph in his power; for he is glorious even in his red apparel, and travels in the greatneſs of his ſtrength.

I muſt here obſerve that I do not mainly intend, in diſcourſing on this ſubject, to eſtabliſh the truth of our Saviour's divine miſſion, againſt thoſe who deny it on the above or any other account: this would be too cold and abſtracted an argument for our preſent purpoſe. What I propoſe, is chiefly and directly deſigned for heightening the devotion, for quickening the love, and increaſing the faith and comfort of believers. However, at the ſame time, conſidering the humiliation of Chriſt in the light of an objection againſt his divine commiſſion from the ſuggeſtions of human wiſdom, what ſhall be ſaid may alſo be conſidered as an anſwer to this objection, and ſerving to remove the offence of the croſs.

1. Upon this ſubject, therefore, obſerve firſt, the glory of our Redeemer, in his ſufferings, appears from his ready and chearful undertaking of the work of our redemption. There can be little honor to any man in ſubmitting to what he cannot avoid, or doing what he dare not refuſe; but the humiliation of Chriſt was perfectly voluntary, as no conſtraint could be put upon him. Therefore his original dignity and greatneſs, is not only, if I may ſpeak ſo, preſerved unhurt, but improved and heightened by the grace of infinite condeſcenſion. This circumſtance of Chriſt's readineſs to undertake the work of our redemption, is often taken notice of in ſcripture. Pſal. xl. 6, 7, 8. "Sacrifice and offering thou didſt not deſire, mine ears "haſt thou opened; burnt-offering and ſin-offering haſt

" thou not required. Then ſaid I, Lo I come; in the " volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do " thy will, O my God!"—It is certain, that redemption could not be the work of a creature; and it is alſo probable, that no created being would have been willing to eſſay it. Nay, it is thought by many to be the import of the remarkable paſſage juſt now cited, which is applied by the apoſtle Paul to our Saviour, that in the councils of heaven it was actually propoſed to thoſe glorious ſpirits that ſurround the throne of God, and their ſtrength and inclination both were found inſufficient. Neither is there any thing improbable in the ſuppoſition, that God might diſcover to them his purpoſe of mercy, upon a proper mediator interpoſing, and that none was found willing to ſubject himſelf to divine wrath, incurred by rebellious man. If ſo, then it is not only in one ſenſe, but in all ſenſes true, what Chriſt is repreſented as ſaying in the 5th verſe of the chapter where my text lies, " And I looked, and there " was none to help; and I wondered that there was none " to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought ſalvation " unto me, and my fury it upheld me." This interpretation may be confirmed by ſomething ſimilar to it, recorded, John, vi. 5, 6. " When Jeſus then lift up his " eyes, and ſaw a great company come unto him, he ſaith " unto Phillip, Whence ſhall we buy bread that theſe may " eat? And this he ſaid to prove him; for he himſelf " knew what he would do." There is another paſſage which gives us nearly the ſame idea, viz. of Chriſt's being only capable of taking the charge of the redeemed and their intereſt in Providence, Rev. v. 2, 3, 4, 5. " And I " ſaw a ſtrong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who " is worthy to open the book, and to looſe the ſeals there- " of? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under " the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look " thereon. And I wept much becauſe no man was found " worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look " thereon. And one of the elders ſaith unto me, Weep " not; behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of " David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to looſe the " ſeven ſeals thereof." How glorious then was the com-

paſſion of our Redeemer, who ſo willingly and chearfully ſubjected himſelf to that abaſement and ſuffering, to which none could conſtrain him? Thus he ſays to himſelf, John x. 17, 18, "Therefore doth my Father love me, becauſe I "lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man "taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myſelf: I have "power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. "This commandment have I received of my Father." He is not repreſented as merely conſenting, becauſe none elſe could or would perform the work, and ſo having it as it were devolved upon him by neceſſity; not as yielding with reluctance, and overcome by great earneſtneſs and importunity, but ſaying with readineſs and chearfulneſs, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book, it is written of "me. I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea thy law "is within my heart."

There is one circumſtance which deſerves particular notice, when we are conſidering the dignity of our Redeemer's undertaking; that he did well and thoroughly underſtand the difficulty of it, and the weight of that wrath which he ſubmitted to endure. It is not ſuch an evidence of greatneſs of mind, when a perſon involves himſelf in difficulties, and expoſes himſelf to dangers, if he only runs an uncertain riſk of meeting with them, or has but a confuſed and indiſtinct apprehenſion of their nature; but it diſcovers a peculiar fortitude of ſpirit to have a clear view of ſufferings, and yet compoſedly and ſteadily to ſubmit to them for a good end. So true is this maxim, that it ſeems to be the only thing that renders human life ſupportable, that all future ſufferings are uncertain even in the event, and, at any rate, in their nature but imperfectly known. Now, how does it ſerve to illuſtrate the glory of our Redeemer's undertaking, that he had a clear and perfect foreknowledge of every event that was to befal him? He knew the number and malice of the enemies he had to encounter; and the bitterneſs of that cup, the dregs of which he was to drink off: Yet ſteady to his purpoſe, and conſcious of his own power, he went out to the combat as one aſſured of victory. As he began ſo he carried on his work, with the ſame undaunted reſolution.

witneſs what he ſays, Luke xii. 50. "But I have a bap-
"tiſm to be baptized with, and how am I ſtraitened till
"it be accompliſhed!" All this, my brethren, is further confirmed, by ſome paſſages which are recorded toward the cloſe of his life, when he drew near to the concluding ſcene of his ſufferings, Matt. xvi. 21. "From that time
"forth began Jeſus to ſhew unto his diſciples, how that
"he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many things of
"the elders, and chief prieſts, and Scribes, and be killed,
"and be raiſed again the third day."——xx. 17, 18, 19.
"And Jeſus going up to Jeruſalem, took the twelve diſci-
"ples apart in the way, and ſaid unto them, Behold we
"go up to Jeruſalem, and the Son of man ſhall be betray-
"ed unto the chief prieſts, and unto the ſcribes, and they
"ſhall condemn him to death. And ſhall deliver him to
"the Gentiles, to mock and to ſcourge, and to crucify
"him: and the third day he ſhall riſe again." Luke ix. 51.
"And it came to paſs, when the time was come that he
"ſhould be received up, he ſtedfaſtly ſet his face to go to
"Jeruſalem." To theſe I ſhall only add, John xviii. 11.
"Then ſaid Jeſus unto Peter, Put up thy ſword into the
"ſheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall
"I not drink it?" Thus did there appear a glory even in his humiliation, a majeſty even in his ſuffering; and thus did he come forth and travel in the greatneſs of his ſtrength.

In the ſecond place, the glory of our Redeemer, in his humiliation, appears from the greatneſs of thoſe ſufferings which he endured. Though, to the eye of ſenſe, a ſtate of ſuffering is apt to appear contemptible; to thoſe who juſtly view the ſufferings of Chriſt, there will be found far greater evidences of his power. A weak perſon is cruſhed by a ſmall weight; but he who is able to endure uncommon ſufferings, ſhows himſelf to be poſſeſſed of uncommon ſtrength. Now, our bleſſed Lord and Saviour did, in his life, in this world, endure the greateſt and moſt dreadful ſufferings. His whole life was one continued track of the heavieſt ſufferings of which human nature is capable. Iſa. liii. 3. "He is deſpiſed and rejected
"of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief:

" and we hid, as it were, our faces from him ; he was de-
" ſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not!" This, my brethren, is a known ſubject, yet it is the ſubject which we ought, by faith, to dwell upon this day ; and, indeed, the benefit and comfort of believers does not depend on things new and engaging to the fancy, but on the Spirit of God ſetting home known truths with force and efficacy on the heart. Let me therefore beg your attention to two or three obvious remarks on the ſufferings of Chriſt. (1.) His afflictions began early, with his firſt entrance into the world. No ſooner did the man Chriſt Jeſus ſee the light of this world, but preſently did affliction ſalute him. Immediately after his contemptible birth, did Herod, that bloody tyrant, ſeek to deſtroy him ; ſo that we may allude to that expreſſion, Rev. xii. 4. " —And the dragon ſtood
" before the woman which was ready to be delivered, to
" devour her child as ſoon as it was born."

(2.) His afflictions were conſtant and perpetual, without interruption. It is recorded, not only by Chriſtians, but even by heathens, who had heard of his life, that he was never obſerved to laugh, but frequently ſeen weeping; ſo that he well accompliſhed that propheſy, " A man of
" ſorrows, and acquainted with grief." It is probable, from ſeveral paſſages in the prophetical writings, that he was of a very tender and ſenſible frame ; and therefore his afflictions had a great and powerful effect upon him. They ſo deeply touched him, that his body was waſted, and his ſtrength melted and decayed, which is the uſual effect of laſting and continued ſorrow. Iſa. lii. 14. " As
" many were aſtonied at thee ; his viſage was ſo marred
" more than any man, and his form more than the ſons of
" men." Pſ. xxii. 14, 15. " I am poured out like water,
" and all my bones are out of joint : my heart is like wax,
" it is melted in the midſt of my bowels : my ſtrength is
" dried up like a potſherd ; and my tongue cleaveth to my
" jaws : and thou haſt brought me into the duſt of death."
So that we may alſo apply to him what Job ſays of himſelf, Job. xvi. 8. " And thou haſt filled me with wrinkles,
" which is a witneſs againſt me : and my leanneſs riſing
" up in me, beareth witneſs to my face."

(3.) His afflictions were of the fevereſt kind. This I might ſhow you, at large, from the hiſtory, by particularizing them all: I only mention four, poverty, reproach, temptation, and ſympathy with others. He was ſo poor, as to depend upon the charity of others for his ſubſtance; and could ſay, Luke ix. 58. "Foxes have holes, and birds "of the air have neſts, but the Son of man hath not where "to lay his head."——Reproach was thrown upon him without meaſure, and of the worſt kind. He was called a glutton and a wine-bibber, a deceiver, a blaſphemer, a Samaritan, and one that had a devil. Now, my brethren, all that know any thing of human nature, know that reproach and contempt are perhaps the hardeſt to bear of any ſufferings to which we are expoſed; and the authors of theſe calumnies were ſuch whoſe circumſtances rendered them moſt ſharp and ſevere; for they were the Scribes and Phariſees, or the miniſters of thoſe times, who ſerved in the temple, as the whole hiſtory ſhows, and his own natural relations, as appears from Mark iii. 21. John vii. 3, 4, 5.—Another remarkable affliction our Lord endured, was temptation, and that of the groſſeſt kind, as is plain from Matth. iv. 3,—11. We are told, "he was in all "points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin." What was the preciſe nature and influence of ſuch temptations on him, we cannot know; only it deſerves notice on this particular, that whereas ſome of the other afflictions he endured, were ſuch as his perfect purity could not but render more tolerable than otherwiſe they would have been, this on the other hand, was ſuch, that by how much the more pure and holy he was, ſo much the more diſtreſs would he feel on being aſſaulted with the vile temptations of the devil, and having his horrid and abominable ſuggeſtions preſented to the fancy.——I only further mention his ſufferings, from ſympathy with others. The moſt excellent and worthy of the human kind are ſuch as have the tendereſt feelings of the ſufferings of others. Now, ſince he was a perfect man, ſince tenderneſs ſeems to have been his ruling character, and his errand into the world a meſſage of love flowing from infinite compaſſion as its cauſe, we muſt ſuppoſe him liable to the fevereſt ſuf-

ferings of this kind. I know the hard-hearted, ſelfiſh world, will find it difficult to conceive this as a ſource of ſevere ſuffering, eſpecially ſuch as have no regard to any thing beyond this world. But this is not the caſe with all; for I am certain there are ſome whoſe ſharpeſt pangs have been occaſioned by the ſufferings of others, eſpecially when of a ſpiritual kind. To form ſome conception of this, let us imagine, what muſt be the anguiſh of a pious and affectionate parent, on the death of a wicked child, who apparently trod in the path of the deſtroyer, and of whom he hath the greateſt reaſon to fear, that he no ſooner cloſed his eyes on the light of this world, than he lifted them up in the torments of hell. Now, as compaſſion was ſtronger in none than in the man Chriſt Jeſus, ſo none could have ſo clear a view of the miſery of thoſe who were the objects of it; and therefore, no doubt, this was a ſource of the deepeſt affliction to his ſoul.

(4.) In the laſt place, the afflictions of our Lord not only continued but increaſed, through his life, till they, at laſt, iſſued in an extraordinary conflict with the powers of darkneſs, and an immediate ſubjection to the wrath of a ſin avenging God. Let it be obſerved, that though I here mention particularly his enduring the wrath of God, as the laſt and finiſhing part of his ſufferings, I do not mean to confine his ſufferings from the hand of God to this ſeaſon. Without all queſtion, every part of his humiliation was ſatisfactory to the divine juſtice, and contributed to appeaſe the wrath of God. This cup was put to his mouth ſo ſoon as he aſſumed our nature; he continued to drink of it daily, and was therefore juſtly ſtiled a man of ſorrows; but, in the cloſe of life, he came to drink off the very bittereſt dregs of it. The waves of divine wrath went over him; and he waded ſtill deeper and deeper in this troubled ocean, till he was well nigh overwhelmed. That Chriſt ſuffered under the wrath of God in an eminent degree, is manifeſt both from the prophecies of the Old Teſtament, and the relation given of the event in the New. Iſa. liii. 5—10. " But he was wounded " for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: " the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with

" his ſtripes we are healed. All we, like ſheep, have " gone aſtray; we have turned every one to his own way, " and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. " He was oppreſſed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened " not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter " and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he open- " eth not his mouth. He was taken from priſon and from " judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? for " he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the " tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken. And he " made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in " his death, becauſe he had done no violence, neither was " any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleaſed the Lord to " bruiſe him: he hath put him to grief: when thou ſhalt " make his ſoul an offering for ſin, he ſhall ſee his ſeed, he " ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall " proſper in his hand." See the relation of his ſufferings in the garden, Matth. xxvi. 38, 39. " Then ſaith he un- " to them, my ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful, even unto " death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he " went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, " ſaying, O, my Father! if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs " from me! nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt!" Mark xiv. 33, 34, 35, 36. " And he taketh with him " Peter, and James, and John, and began to be ſore ama- " zed, and to be very heavy, and ſaith unto them, my ſoul " is exceeding ſorrowful unto death! tarry ye here, and " watch: and he went forward a little, and fell on the " ground, and prayed, that if it were poſſible the hour " might paſs from him! And he ſaid, Abba, Father, all " things are poſſible unto thee: take away this cup from " me! nevertheleſs, not what I will, but what thou wilt!" Luke xxii. 43, 44. " And there appeared an angel unto " him from heaven, ſtrengthening him; and, being in " an agony, he prayed more earneſtly! and his ſweat " was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the " ground!"

That the ſame deep diſtreſs of ſoul continued upon the croſs, is plain from this lamentable exclamation, Matth. xxvii. 46. " And, about the ninth hour, Jeſus cried with

" a loud voice, ſaying, Eli, Eli, lamaſabachthani! that " is to ſay, my God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me!" In what manner, preciſely, Chriſt ſuffered the wrath of God on this occaſion, it would be too bold for us to determine; whether it was only God's withdrawing from his human ſoul the comforts of his ſenſible preſence—his being aſſaulted and diſtreſſed with the infernal ſuggeſtions of the devil—his having a lively picture preſented to his imagination of the miſeries of mankind here, and hereafter, on account of ſin, and ſuffering with them by compaſſion and ſympathy—or, finally, God's poſitively inflicting upon him, for a ſeaſon, the ſame puniſhment in kind, at leaſt, if not in degree, that ſhould have befallen thoſe for whom he ſuffered, and which the impenitent ſtill ſhall for ever endure. This laſt is by ſome ſuppoſed impoſſible and contradictory, as much of their miſery ariſes from an evil conſcience, from which he was abſolutely free; and from deſpair of mercy, which none will affirm that even God's deſertion of him at that awful ſeaſon did imply. It is probable, there was a mixture of all theſe particulars in his mingled cup. And, as to the laſt, I ſhall only ſay, that the pain and anguiſh that follows any reflection of a rational ſoul is only connected with it by the determination of God the Creator of our ſpirits: therefore it was certainly in the power of the Almighty to inflict a ſenſe of pain in any kind, or in any degree, on the holy created ſoul of the man, Chriſt Jeſus. And I ſee no other contrariety to the divine perfections, in inflicting that very anguiſh on the holy and innocent Saviour, than in ſubſtituting him in our room at all, and bruiſing him for our iniquities. One thing is certain, that, in his life, and at his death, he ſuffered what was a full reparation of the diſhonor done to God; a ſufficient vindication of the purity of his nature and the authority of his broken law, and what purchaſed pardon and peace, ſanctification, and eternal glory, to a whole world of elect ſinners.

And now, my brethren, from this view, did not our Redeemer travel in the greatneſs of his ſtrength? Was it a ſmall ſtrength that could go through all this track of ſuffering, without ſinking in the way? Yet this did he with

unſhaken conſtancy; and, as his giving up his life was the laſt part of it, ſo he expired not, before he could ſay, IT IS FINISHED! Well, then, might the anſwer be given to the queſtion in my text, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?* in the words that follow, "I that ſpeak in righte-"ouſneſs, mighty to ſave."

We proceed to obſerve in the third place, that the glory of our Redeemer in his ſufferings, appears from the purity of his carriage, and the perfection of his patience under them. The former conſideration ſhows his natural ſtrength, (ſo to ſpeak) and this his moral excellence. Affliction is the touchſtone of virtue, tries its ſincerity, and illuſtrates its beauty. Therefore we are told, Heb. ii. 10. "That it became him, for whom are all things, and by "whom are all things, in bringing many ſons unto glory, "to make the captain of their ſalvation perfect through "ſufferings." Nothing could give a greater value to the ſacrifice he offered up, than the meekneſs and patience with which he reſigned that life which was not forfeited, but voluntarily ſurrendered. Iſa. liii. 7. "He was op-"preſſed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his "mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as "a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he opened not "his mouth." It is worth while to reflect, on that continued and invincible patience with which he went through the ſeveral ſteps of his ſufferings: that reproach and calumny, that contempt and abuſe, which he met with from thoſe in whoſe intereſt he was ſo deeply engaged, did not excite his indignation, but his compaſſion. Luke xix. 41. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city and "wept over it, ſaying, if thou hadſt known, even thou, at "leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy "peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." When his ignorant diſciples would have defended him from the aſſaults of his enemies, he ſays, John xviii. 11.—"The "cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink "it?" When he entered upon the laſt and heavieſt part of his ſufferings, and began to feel their anguiſh, he ſays,

John xii. 27, "Now is my ſoul troubled, and what ſhall "I ſay? Father, ſave me from this hour! but for this "cauſe came I unto this hour." And in that dreadful ſeaſon, when in the midſt of his hardeſt conflict, this is the form of his prayer, Matth. xxvi. 39. "O my Father! "if it be poſſible let this cup paſs from me: nevertheleſs, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." And a little after, verſe 42. "O my Father! if this cup may not paſs away "from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Was not this divine glory ſhining through the dark cloud that encompaſſed him? Was not this the patience of a God? And, in ſpite of the ſhame of the croſs on which he hung, did it not conſtrain the centurion that attended his crucifixion to ſay, "Certainly this was a righteous man! Tru- "ly this was the Son of God!"

In the laſt place, The glory of a ſuffering Saviour appears from the end he had in view in his ſufferings, and which he ſo effectually obtained. This was none other than the glory of the great God, and the everlaſting ſalvation of elect ſinners. It was to do the will of his heavenly Father that he came into the world, and in doing this he delighted. Towards the cloſe of his life he thus addreſſes his Father, John xvii. 4, "I have glorified thee on the "earth; I have finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me "to do." He not only exhibited a fair and bright image of the divine glory in his perſonal character, while he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, but in his work as Mediator, illuſtrated all the perfections of God; and in particular, glorified his juſtice and magnified his mercy. If therefore a worthy end beautifies and ennobles any difficult undertaking, this excellent purpoſe muſt give dignity to a crucified Saviour.

But ought we not to add, the end ſo cloſely connected with this, the ſalvation of periſhing ſinners. Is not this a deſign, of the beauty of which we ought to be particularly ſenſible? Had not our compaſſionate Redeemer ſtept in between us and the ſtroke of divine juſtice, we had for ever lain under the wrath of the Almighty. And, Oh, how unable had we been to bear that vengeance which was ſo heavy to him! How glorious does he appear to

the convinced ſinner in his red apparel! and what reaſon has he to ſay, "Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to "receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, "and honor, and glory, and bleſſing!"

I ſhall now conclude this head with obſerving, that I have all along conſidered Chriſt as God and man, in one perſon, our Mediator. I am ſenſible, however, he could only ſuffer in his human nature, and indeed became man that he might be capable of ſuffering. But it was the inconceivable union of the human nature with the divine, from which he derived his glory, which gave him ſtrength for ſuffering, and made his ſufferings of value ſufficient for the purchaſe of our redemption.

I come, now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1ſt, We are, here, called to admire and adore the unſearchable wiſdom, and unſpeakable love of God. There is a boundleſs depth in all the works and ways of God, and particularly here. Upon a ſlight view, we may be apt to take offence at the croſs; to hide our faces from him; to be diſguſted at an incarnate God, the Lord of glory, deſpiſed and trampled on by a proud Phariſee; the Creator of the ends of the earth ſtanding at the judgment-ſeat of a weak mortal; and the Author of life giving up the ghoſt. But, upon a nearer inſpection, muſt we not admire the harmony of the divine attributes, in our redemption, upon this plan? that theſe perfections which ſeem to limit each other in their exerciſe, ſhould be, in conjunction, more illuſtriouſly diſplayed: that God's infinite holineſs, and abhorrence of ſin, nay, his impartial juſtice, ſhould be more diſplayed in the pardon than the condemnation of the ſinner: that ſo ſignal a defeat ſhould be given to the enemy of ſouls, even when he ſeemed exulting in the ſucceſs of his deſigns: that our Lord, by death, ſhould deſtroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and, by being lifted up from the earth, as unworthy of a place on it, he ſhould draw all men unto him, joining thus the extremities of glory and baſeneſs, power and humiliation, and travelling in the greatneſs of his ſtrength. This, without doubt, ſhall afford ſubject for the adoring inquiry

of glorified ſaints to eternal ages; and we ought to begin it here, ſaying with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxii. 17, "His "name ſhall endure forever; his name ſhall be continued "as long as the ſun; and men ſhall be bleſſed in him; all "nations ſhall call him bleſſed!"

2dly, Suffer me to improve the ſubject, by ſhewing the guilt and danger of all who are not reconciled to God, eſpecially thoſe, who, by continuing in unbelief and impenitence, ſhall die in that condition. There is nothing we can more juſtly infer from what hath been ſaid, than the holineſs of God, and his deteſtation of ſin. Such is the hardneſs of heart of many ſinners, and ſuch their partiality to themſelves, that it is a matter of the utmoſt difficulty to convince them either of their guilt or danger. But, if you have any belief in the truths of the goſpel, if you believe the certainty of that tranſaction which we are this day to commemorate, with what fear and trembling ought you to reflect upon the juſtice of God? If he puniſhed ſin ſo ſeverely in the perſon of his own Son, how ſhall he puniſh it in the perſons of the finally impenitent? If a temporary ſuffering of the wrath of God was ſo terrible to him, who travelled through it in the greatneſs of his ſtrength, what ſhall it be to thoſe who ſhall lie under it to eternity, without the leaſt ray of hope or conſolation? what ſhall it be to thoſe who ſhall have nothing to ſupport them in their unchangeable abode, but an accuſing conſcience, and deſpair of mercy?

I cannot help obſerving, hear it, O ſinners, and tremble! that a deſpiſed goſpel ſhall be an aggravation of the guilt, and an addition to the miſery, of all to whom it was offered, Heb. ii. 2. "For, if the word ſpoken by angels "was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience "received a juſt recompence of reward, how ſhall we eſ- "cape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation?"—Heb. x. 28, 29. "He that deſpiſed Moſes' law died, without mercy, un- "der two or three witneſs: of how much ſorer puniſh- "ment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath "trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted "the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, "an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit

" of grace ?" The severity of the punishment of sinners rejecting the gospel, shall bear a just proportion to the love and mercy of God manifested in that dispensation. If these are justly called unspeakably great, the other must be inconceivably dreadful. Every drop of that blood, which was spilt in behalf of sinners, shall be as oil to the flames that consume the impenitent, and make them burn with greater fierceness, to all the ages of eternity. Remember, I beseech you, that our Saviour shall continue in the character of administrator of the covenant of grace, till the final doom of sinners be ordained. The same person, whose soul was made an offering for sin, and who groaned on Calvary, shall, one day, come in his own and in his Father's glory, attended with his angels, as the ministers of his justice; then " every eye shall see him, and those " also that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall " wail because of him." Then how shall his enemies stand before him, when those who came to apprehend him fell to the ground, at his word, even in his humiliation ? Those who obstinately refuse to be the trophies of his grace, shall then be the monuments of his vengeance. It is very remarkable, that as the nation of the Jews were a people uncommonly favored of God, particularly by the enjoyment of the personal ministry of Christ, and hearing the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; so, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquities, by rejecting him, the judgment that fell upon them was the most signal, and terrible, and lasting, that ever was inflicted on any people. In this they were an example of the fate of a whole world of sinners; and, indeed, the destruction of Jerusalem is described in such terms as do naturally suggest to us the final judgment of the world, and teach us what to expect, " when the Lord Jesus shall be " revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance " on them that know not God, and that obey not the gos- " pel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

" He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Now the Saviour is in the posture of a humble supplicant, standing at the door of many hard hearts, and knocking, and asking admission. Now does he earnestly beseech you, by

his mercies, to be reconciled to God; but then ſhall he put on the frowns and terrors of a judge; and how ſhall they be able to lift up their eyes towards him, who now trample upon his love? See a repreſentation of this matter, Rev. vi. 14, 15, 16, 17. "And the heaven departed "as a ſcroll when it is rolled together; and every moun- "tain and iſland were moved out of their places: and the "kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, "and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every "bondman, and every freeman, hid themſelves in the "dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and ſaid to "the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from "the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the "wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is "come; and who ſhall be able to ſtand!" It is remarkable, that the wrath here ſpoken of, is called *the wrath of the Lamb.* Strange expreſſion indeed! but ſtrongly ſignifying, that his preſent meekneſs, and patience, and ſuffering ſhall inflame and exaſperate his future vengeance. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, I would beſeech every ſinner in this aſſembly, to conſider the things that belong to his peace—that the ſame ſtrength and power of our Redeemer, that was evident in his ſuffering in our ſtead, that is evident in working out the ſalvation of his own people, ſhall alſo be evident in the judgment of his enemies. Pſal. ii. 11, 12. "Serve the Lord with fear, "and rejoice with trembling. Kiſs the Son, leſt he be "angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath is "kindled but a little: Bleſſed are all they that put their "truſt in him."

In the 3d place, I would improve this ſubject, for the encouragement of ſinners to return to God through Chriſt. It was for this very end, that God laid help upon One that is mighty, and raiſed up a choſen One out of the *people.* Is there, then, among you, an awakened ſinner, who trembles at the proſpect of Divine wrath, upon whoſe heart God, in his mercy, has carried home a conviction of his loſt ſtate, and who is crying out, *What ſhall I do to be ſaved!* Behold, here, the peace-ſpeaking blood of the Lamb of God! Behold, here, not only your ranſom paid,

and juſtice fully ſatisfied, but a powerful, an Almighty Saviour, able to ſave to the uttermoſt, all that come unto God by him! He has gone through his work, in the greatneſs of his ſtrength! He hath foiled your ſpiritual enemies, and made a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them in his croſs! My brethren there is the greater need earneſtly to intreat your attention to this, that a ſlothful deſpondency, and diffidence of ſucceſs, is what keeps many ſinners from a hearty return to God. There is more of this in the hearts of many than they themſelves are aware of: I do not mean deſpair of mercy alone, but deſpair of recovery from a ſtate of ſin, of deliverance from the bondage of corruption, and attaining to the diſpoſition and character of God's children. Are there not many of you, my brethren, who, though you, in ſome meaſure, ſee the excellence and happineſs of a ſtate of favor with God and holy conformity to his will, yet finding how ſtrongly you are wedded to the world and its ſinful enjoyments, and knowing, by experience, the unſucceſsfulneſs of former reſolutions taken in your own ſtrength, you have no hope of ſucceſs, and ſo, in a ſullen obſtinacy, refuſe to attempt what you think you cannot accompliſh? Do you not ſee, from what hath been ſaid, both your former error, and what is now the proper cure? You can do nothing of yourſelves; but through Chriſt ſtrengthening you, you may do all things. He is an Almighty Saviour: he is ſtronger than the ſtrong man who detains you in bondage: he is able to knock off the ſtrongeſt fetters, and let the priſoners go free. Wherefore, I beſeech you, my dear friends, as you value your everlaſting intereſt, that you do not ſit ſtill and periſh, but ariſe and be doing, and the Lord will be with you.

In the 4th place, the ſame inſtruction, with little difference, may be given to the people of God. As ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-confidence, are the ruling characters of the unregenerate: ſo they are diſeaſes never entirely cured in this world, even in the beſt, and lamentably prevalent in many of God's own children. As their work is to obtain a victory over their corruptions and grow in the exerciſe of every Chriſtian grace, they often at-

tempt both theſe, too much in their own ſtrength. As the natural and unavoidable conſequence of this, they meet with frequent diſappointments; theſe make them ready to ſit down in ſlothful careleſſneſs, and decline the ſtruggle to which they find themſelves unequal, nay, too often not without ſecret murmurings and complaints againſt God, as a hard maſter, requiring bricks, and giving no ſtraw; inſtead of concluding, from their unſucceſsfulneſs, that they muſt have taken their meaſures wrong, they conclude the attempt itſelf to be vain, and the work impracticable. But, my brethren, here is a truth, which not only the word of God every where teaches, but which almoſt every part of his Providence towards us is intended to ratify, *that in us dwelleth no good thing*; that we can hardly have too low an opinion of our own worth, or our own ſtrength; but, at the ſame time, that God is able and willing to perfect ſtrength in our weakneſs. He is able to uphold the weakeſt ſelf-denied Chriſtian in the midſt of the moſt dangerous temptations, though he often ſuffers the ſelf-ſufficient to fall before his enemies. Wherefore, my dear friends, believe in the Almighty power of your Redeemer; and I hope you will know to your experience, that "he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have "no might, he increaſeth ſtrength."

In the 5th place, ſuffer me to improve this ſubject, for the comfort and refreſhment of every diſconſolate and mourning ſoul. As weary and heavy laden ſinners are the perſons to whom the call of the goſpel is addreſſed, ſo ſurely it alſo ſpeaks peace to weary and heavy laden ſaints. This world was plainly deſigned as a place of trial and diſcipline, and not of complete reſt to the children of God. It often pleaſes him, in his ſovereign and holy providence, not only to afflict them with outward trials, but to hide his face from them, and viſit them with diſtreſs of ſoul. May not all ſuch ſee, from what has been ſaid, that they are but conformed to their Redeemer; that they are but treading in the path which he hath ſanctified: and is it not "enough for the diſciple, that he be as his Maſter, "and for the ſervant, that he be as his Lord?" It would be a great point gained, if we could but be convinced, that

afflictions are what we muſt look for, and ſo not haſtily and raſhly conclude, that he is "rebuking us in his wrath, "and chaſtening us in his hot diſpleaſure." Is it not comfortable, and is it not true, that Chriſt hath taken away the ſting of death, and of every ſuffering from his people, and left nothing but that correction which is healthful and neceſſary? Above all, ought you not to look to the power of your Redeemer, and his almighty ſtrength, as ſufficient to ſupport you now, and at laſt work your complete deliverance? Baniſh every thought that tends to repreſent your caſe, either as ſingular to abate your ſenſe of the divine goodneſs, or as deſperate to weaken your hands in ſeeking relief; and make your requeſt to God, "with "ſtrong crying and tears, that he, as the God of hope, "would fill you with all joy, and peace in believing, that "you may rejoice with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory."

6th. I ſhall now conclude all, with an earneſt invitation to all intending communicants, to come to the table of the Lord, and, by faith, to feed upon the rich entertainment that is there provided for them. See here the price of your redemption; the evidence and ſecurity of your pardon; the ſeal of God's love to you; and the certain pledge of every neceſſary bleſſing. "It pleaſed the Fa-"ther, that in Chriſt ſhould all fulneſs dwell, and of his "fulneſs you may all receive, and grace for grace." His body, broken, is the bread of life, that muſt nouriſh your ſouls to their everlaſting ſtate. His blood, ſhed, is a never failing cordial to a broken ſpirit, and a moſt excellent refreſhment to the ſoul that pants in a parched wilderneſs. May the Lord himſelf meet with us and bleſs us, viſit us with his gracious preſence, and make us joyful in his houſe of prayer. Amen.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

SERMON 19.

HEBREWS iii. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.

WE see many mysterious things in the frame of nature, and the course of Providence. But nothing can be more mysterious and wonderful than what we may often see in the state of our own hearts. When there is no present soliciting temptation, and when we consider, in a cool and deliberate manner, the consequences of vice and wickedness, even barely from the dictates of natural conscience, it seems surprizing, that, in any instance, we should yield to it; that we should be induced to break the peace of our own minds, and provoke the vengeance of an Almighty Judge; nay, to do so for a trifling, momentary, and uncertain satisfaction. But if it be unreasonable to offend God at all, and to take but a few steps in the paths of sin, how much more above measure astonishing is it, that men should adhere to their former mistakes, and should not open their eyes after repeated admonitions of their danger, and daily experience of their own folly!

I believe every body will be sensible, that many sinners, even setting aside the consideration of some of the most im-

portant religious truths, act in a manner so directly opposite to their own present interest as is not to be accounted for, without supposing them under an amazing degree of blindness and infatuation. This is to be resolved into *the deceitfulness of sin*, a circumstance on this great subject well worthy of our most serious attention.

In entering on the deceitfulness of sin, let us reflect a little on the meaning of the expression. Who is it that is deceived; It is the sinner himself. Does he need to be deceived? Is there not in us all a strong enough direct inclination to that which is evil, ready to burst asunder every restraining tie? There is so; and yet there is more in our danger than merely a propensity to sin. There is also a deceit and imposition which over-reaches us, and insnares us into the commission of what, but for that mistake, we would have avoided or abhorred. There is very frequent mention made of this in scripture; many cautions against being deceived; and indeed all sin is represented as error and delusion, in which a deceived heart hath turned us aside.

Again, if the sinner is deceived, who is it, or what is it that deceives him? Here we must observe, that when we speak of sin's being deceitful, it is not so much any thing without us, taking the advantage of our weakness, but it is the effect and evidence of the strength of corruption within us, which makes us see things in a wrong light and draw unjust and pernicious consequences from them. Let us always remember, that the whole frame of nature, although it be the scene of temptation, and even the fuel of concupiscence, is faultless in itself; nay it presents us every where with lessons of piety and obedience to its Author. The mistake here arises wholly from ourselves. There is a remarkable difference between the deceitfulness of sin and deceit of any other kind; in worldly transactions, the person deceived is never supposed unfaithful to himself, but is imposed on by the superior art and cunning of the deceiver. But it is otherwise in spiritual matters, where the deceitfulness of sin is but another form of speech for the corruption and treachery of our own hearts. It is true, in some instances of delusion, there is

an activity of outward agents, if I may speak so, the devil and wicked men, who use no little industry to seduce others, and lie in wait to deceive; but this, if I mistake not, does not belong properly to the deceitfulness of sin, which lies in the disposition of our own hearts, and is what lays us open to their snares.

I shall only further observe, by way of introduction, that this subject is equally applicable to good men and bad. Both ought to dread, and both ought to be warned of the deceitfulness of sin; it betrays good men into distress, as well as bad men into ruin.

In further discoursing on this subject, I shall,

I. Endeavor to open a little the chief branches of *the deceitfulness of sin.*

II. Consider the duty founded upon it, of *exhorting one another daily.*

III. Make some practical improvement of the subject.

First, then, I shall endeavor to open a little the chief branches of the deceitfulness of sin: And I think the deceitfulness of sin may be divided into these three general branches. 1. Its disguising itself, and wholly concealing its nature. 2. Its forming excuses for itself, and thereby extenuating its guilt. 3. Its insinuating itself by degrees, and leading men on from the voluntary commission of some sins to the necessity of committing more.

1st, then, The deceitfulness of sin appears from its disguising itself, and wholly concealing its nature. Though the great lines of the law of God are written upon the conscience in so strong and legible characters, that it is difficult wholly to efface them, yet it is plain that men have often brought this about to a surprising degree. The Psalmist David, sensible how often sin is concealed from our own view, exclaims, Psal. xix. 12, "Who can under-"stand his errors! cleanse thou me from secret faults." What ingenious reasonings do men often use with their own minds to prove the lawfulness of what inclination leads them to, either with respect to profit or pleasure? When the heart pleads the cause, the understanding is a very favorable judge. Every one may find a great num-

ber of examples of this in his own experience, and may daily see the unhappy effects of it in others.

For the better illustrating of this truth, that sin is often wholly concealed, even from the man in whom it dwells, be pleased to attend to the following observations:

(1.) Sometimes it shows itself in the prevalence of loose principles. I am sorry to say, that we live in an age in which infidelity of the grossest kind, is spreading its poison among all ranks and degrees of men. But why is it so readily entertained? Because it either sets men at liberty from the ties of conscience and a future reckoning altogether; or greatly narrows the extent, and weakens the obligations of the law of God. How sweet and palatable to the corrupt mind is every thing that removes restraints, and suffers the sinner to walk in the ways of his own heart, and the sight of his own eyes? It is not reason, but inclination, that makes proselytes to these destructive doctrines. The truth is, would you reason impartially, you would conclude that the principles must be false which tend to set men at ease in their crimes. When therefore the arguments in their favor are so easily admitted, we have just ground to affirm that it is owing to the deceitfulness of sin.

(2.) If we proceed from principles to practice, and from generals to particulars, we shall find how sin disguises itself, and hides its deformity from our view. It never appears in its own proper and genuine dress, nor loves to be called by its proper name. Thus excess and intemperance is called, and unhappily thought by many, a social disposition and good fellowship. Pride and unchristian resentment, is called honor, spirit, and dignity of mind. Vain pomp, luxury, and extravagance, are styled taste, elegance, and refinement. Sordid avarice and love of money, calls itself prudence, frugality, and good management. Levity, folly, and even obscenity, is often called innocent liberty, chearfulness, and good humor. So great is the deceit, and so secure does the sin lie under its disguise, that a minister may preach with the utmost severity against these several vices, and the guilty persons

hear with patience or approbation, and never once think of applying it to themſelves.

This deceit diſcovers itſelf alſo by its counterpart. How common is it to ſtigmatize and diſparage true piety and goodneſs by the moſt opprobrious titles. Tenderneſs of conſcience, is, by many, reproached under the character of preciſeneſs and narrowneſs of mind. Zeal againſt ſin, and fidelity to the ſouls of others, is called ſourneſs, moroſeneſs, and ill nature. There was never yet a faithful reprover, from Lot in Sodom to the preſent day, but he ſuffered under the reproach and ſlander of thoſe who would not be reclaimed. I might eaſily run over many more inſtances in both theſe kinds; for, to ſay the truth, the whole ſtrain of faſhionable converſation is often nothing elſe but an illuſion put upon the mind, that it may loſe its horror of vice; and it is greatly to be lamented, that this is done with ſo much ſucceſs. In many caſes, young perſons eſpecially, are inſpired with a hatred and averſion at true and undefiled religion, and that under the moſt plauſible pretences. Many, my brethren, there are who are far from thinking it themſelves, and yet fall under the denunciation of the Prophet Iſaiah, v. 20—24. "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter. Wo unto them that are wiſe in their own eyes, and prudent in their own ſight. Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of ſtrength to mingle ſtrong drink: which juſtify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteouſneſs of the righteous from him. Therefore, as the fire devoureth the ſtubble, and the flame conſumeth the chaff, ſo their root ſhall be as rottenneſs, and their bloſſom ſhall go up as duſt; becauſe they have caſt away the law of the Lord of Hoſts, and deſpiſed the word of the Holy One of Iſrael."

(3.) But the higheſt degree of this branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, is, when it not only puts on a decent and lawful appearance, but aſſumes the garb of eminent piety and worth. There is nothing impoſſible in this. As Satan ſometimes transforms himſelf into an angel of light,

ſo ſome of the greateſt ſins will take the name, and arrogate the honor, of the moſt diſtinguiſhed virtues. I do not here mean the caſe of groſs hypocriſy; that is foreign from the preſent ſubject. Hypocrites know their own inſincerity well enough, and only put on an appearance of piety to deceive others. But even when there is no known or deliberate hypocriſy, ſin may inſinuate itſelf under the appearance of the moſt important duties. Men may indulge the moſt hateful paſſions with the greater liberty, when they think they are doing what is acceptable to God.

The croſs of our bleſſed Maſter is full fraught with inſtruction of every kind. It gives us, particularly, a ſtriking example of what I have now ſaid. His enemies, who perſecuted him with unrelenting malice through his life, and at laſt prevailed to have him hanged on a tree, did it, ſome, no doubt, from a pretended, but many of them from a miſguided zeal for religion. He was crucified as a deceiver and a blaſphemer; and that in this they were miſled, appears from the language of his prayer for them on the croſs, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what "they do." What a conviction ſhould this give us of the deceitfulneſs of ſin; that the greateſt ſin that ever was committed on earth, was yet conſidered, by the guilty, as a duty!

Let us alſo conſider our Saviour's remarkable prediction on the ſame ſubject, and how often it hath been fulfilled: John xvi. 2. "They ſhall put you out of the ſyna-"gogues! yea, the time cometh, that whoſoever killeth "you, will think that he doth God ſervice." My brethren, think a little on the many dreadful perſecutions which good men have endured for conſcience ſake; the terrible tortures they have been expoſed to, in which the utmoſt invention of the human mind has been employed to aggravate their diſtreſs. Think, in particular, of the horrible tribunal of inquiſition, which is, to this day, in full authority in countries not very diſtant; and does it not inſpire you with the higheſt deteſtation of the bloody tyrants? But there is another reflection not ſo frequently made, yet at leaſt equally proper. How great is the deceit-

fulneſs of ſin in the human heart, that can make men ſuppoſe that ſuch atrocious crimes are acceptable to God? Yet they certainly do ſo. Neither would it be poſſible for them, ſo entirely to diveſt themſelves of every ſentiment of humanity, if they were not inflamed by the rage of bigotry and falſe zeal. Let not any imagine, that theſe are dreadful crimes, but which they are not in the leaſt danger of. We ought to maintain the greateſt watchfulneſs and jealouſy over our own ſpirits. It may very eaſily, and does very frequently happen, that an apparent zeal for religion is more than half compoſed of pride, malice, envy, or revenge.

Nor is this all. In the above caſes, by the treachery of the human heart, ſins are changed into duties, and, in many others, every day, duties are changed into ſins, by the perverſion of the principle from which they ought to flow. Many a ſober, temperate perſon, oweth his regularity more to a luſt of gold, than to any ſenſe of duty and obedience to God. The deſire of praiſe, or the fear of reproach, is many times a reſtraint more powerful than the apprehenſion of eternal judgment. Men may put one duty alſo in the place of another, and by that means convert it into ſin. Nay, with regard to all our duties, we may be tempted to place that truſt and dependance on them which is only due to our Redeemer's perfect righteouſneſs; and, inſtead of acts of obedience, make them idols of jealouſy before God.

How great then the deceitfulneſs of ſin, which is capable of putting on ſo many and ſuch artful diſguiſes, and even to counterfeit true piety, which ſtands in the moſt immediate and direct oppoſition to it! There are more ways than I can poſſibly enumerate, by which men deceive themſelves, and become obſtinate and incorrigible in what is evil, by miſtaking it for what is good. Juſtly does the Apoſtle, in this paſſage, warn Chriſtians againſt being hardened; for if ſin can hardly be reſtrained, even by the moſt conſtant vigilance, and the moſt ſteady reſiſtance, what progreſs will it not make, what ſtrength muſt it not acquire, when it is approved and cheriſhed, nay, when it

is profecuted with all that care and attention which ought to have been employed for its utter deſtruction?

2. In the ſecond place, The deceitfulneſs of ſin, appears from its forming excuſes for itſelf, and thereby extenuating its guilt. That it is natural for ſinners to form excuſes for themſelves, and endeavor to extenuate their guilt, daily experience is a ſufficient proof. Nay, it is uſual to obſerve, how able, and ingenious, perſons, otherwiſe of no great capacity, are in this art; even children diſcover the greateſt quickneſs and facility in it, and are no ſooner challenged for any thing that is amiſs, than they are ready to produce an apology. The diſpoſition, indeed, ſeems to be hereditary, and to have been handed down to us from the firſt parents of the human race. On their being challenged for their diſobedience, each of them confeſſes the fact, but immediately adds an excuſe, Gen. iii. 11, 12, 13. "Haſt thou eaten of the tree, whereof "I commanded thee, that thou ſhouldeſt not eat; And "the man ſaid, the woman whom thou gaveſt to be with "me, ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the "Lord God ſaid unto the woman, what is this that thou "haſt done? And the woman ſaid, the ſerpent beguiled "me, and I did eat." You will eaſily be ſenſible, that it is impoſſible for me to enumerate the ſeveral excuſes, or diſtinct alleviating circumſtances, that may be pleaded in favor of particular ſins, becauſe theſe are infinitely various. I intend, therefore, only to mention ſome of the chief conſiderations that are offered by pretended reaſoners, or which have a ſecret influence upon the mind of the ſinner; and which leſſen the impreſſion of the evil of ſin in general.

(1.) One excuſe, which, however weak, has no ſmall influence in ſetting men's minds at eaſe in the commiſſion of ſin, is no other than the commonneſs of it; and that there are multitudes of others in the like condition. It is wonderful to think what boldneſs ſinners often derive from this circumſtance, and how hard it is to perſuade them of the danger of what is common and generally practiſed. Even good men are often carried away with prevailing and epidemical ſins. We may take the illuſtra-

tion of this from any particular sin. How ready are men to think, and even to speak, in the following manner? If this be a sin, I am sure I am not singular in it; there are many others guilty as well as I. They seem to look upon the practice of others, as a sort of support and justification of their own conduct.

But, my brethren, I beseech you to consider how delusive and dangerous these thoughts are to your immortal souls. If any credit is to be given to the scripture representation, the human race, in general, is under guilt: and therefore, the commonness, nay, the universality of any practice, is not sufficient to give it a sanction, as lawful and safe. Will the law of an unchangeable, God be altered or abated in favor of his apostate creatures, because of their number? Is there such a number of offenders, as to be able to make head against their almighty Creator? Sometimes, indeed, the transgressors of human laws are so numerous, as to be formidable to their very judges; but no such thing can take place here. Or will it, in truth, be any consolation to the sufferers in hell, that they have society in their torment? Were a great number of malefactors to be executed together, would this alleviate the punishment to any one of them? I apprehend it would rather increase it, since they would, in a good measure, feel each others sufferings; as it certainly would add greater horror to the sight. Wherefore, my dear brethren, I beseech every one of you, to consider the necessity of reconciliation and peace with God, and that it is not less important and necessary to you, on account of the multitudes you see around you so fast asleep in security and sloth.

(2.) Another excuse that men often make for their sins, is, that they are comparatively small. When they see, think, or hear of the monstrous and atrocious crimes of others, they are ready to bless themselves in their security, and to reckon upon their less degree of guilt, as a species of innocence. Believe it, my brethren, I have found, with concern, persons in a dangerous sickness, or the prospect of death, taking comfort to themselves, and mentioning, with much satisfaction, that they were not so bad as some others; that they had never committed this or the

other heinous crime; that they had never done as this or the other desperate profligate had done, with whom they were acquainted. To all such we may justly apply the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. x. 12. "For we dare not make "ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some "that commend themselves: but they, measuring them- "selves by themselves, and comparing themselves amongst "themselves, are not wise."

There is a wonderful propensity in the proud spirit of man, to gratify itself by comparison with others. Comparison, indeed, is the very fuel of pride; for of what are we proud, but of something in which it is supposed we excel. Is there any thing more common in conversation, when any instance of the sin or folly of others is narrated, than for the hearers, every one, to take the benefit of it to himself, and to say, I am sure I should never have done so and so, had I been in his case. Scarce any man finds fault with another for his conduct in his station, without blazoning and displaying his own real or imagined excellence. I do not say, that good men are wholly free from this fault; yet, as the principles of sin and grace are directly opposite, in general, the same views that make a bad man proud, tend to make a good man humble.—The gross sins of others, which incline careless persons to glory, that they are free from the charge, often tend to discover to the Christian the sinfulness of his nature, which is capable of such impiety. They fill him with humble adoration, and thankfulness to that gracious God, who only maketh him to differ. He knows, that had he been left to himself, he might have exceeded the most abandoned profligate within the compass of his knowledge.

Let me therefore, my brethren, caution you and myself against all excuses drawn from comparison in any form. For, not to mention how ready we are to mistake and be partial to ourselves in making the comparison: not to mention that, though we were ever so impartial, as the hearts of others are not open to us, nor the motives of their conduct, we cannot make it with certainty: I only insist, that all comparisons, whether they be just or unjust, are unspeakably pernicious. It is not your being better

or worſe than others, that will juſtify you before God, or be the matter of inquiry at the laſt day. You will not then be aſked, whether you were as profane a blaſphemer as ſuch a perſon? as great a liar as another? as great a drunkard as another? as great a whoremonger as another? No. You muſt be weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary, and all that are there found wanting, ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire. You may leave it to a wiſe and righteous God to proportion the ſeverity of his judgment to the atrociouſneſs of the ſinner's guilt. "But except a man "be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God." A man may be drowned in five fathom water, as well as in five thouſand; and, therefore, let none fooliſhly flatter themſelves with the hope of ſecurity, even though they really ſee many (to ſpeak in the language of ſcripture) "tenfold more the children of hell than themſelves."

(3.) Sinners are apt to look for another ſource of excuſes for their ſins in themſelves. They are ſtrongly inclined to make a merit of any actions they have done that are materially good, and think that ſome indulgence is due to their faults and miſcarriages on that account. They ſet their good works and their faults, as it were, in oppoſite columns, as if they intended, in that manner, to ſtrike the balance. There is very much of this diſpoſition in the natural unenlightened mind. We find many ſentiments ſimilar to this in the heathen world. 'Every man,' ſays a certain author, 'has ſome virtues, and 'ſome faults; he that hath more virtues than faults, is a 'good man; and he that hath more faults than virtues, is a 'bad man.' I am ſenſible there might be ſome juſtice in ſuch a compariſon, after a perſon has really been brought to the ſervice of God upon genuine principles. It might then ſerve to ſhew whether God or the world hath moſt of our prevailing love, and our habitual ſervice. But this rule is highly pernicious, when an ignorant or vicious man endeavors to apply it: for, firſt of all, theſe very actions, which they ſuppoſe to be good, not flowing from a real principle of obedience to God, are falſely reckoned virtues in them. O that ſelf-righteous perſons would but faithfully examine the motives from which many of their

boasted virtues flow! The more they knew of themselves, and their own real character, the less would they be inclined to glory in its excellence and perfection. It is certain, that even in the world, the more a man presumes to commend himself, the less others are disposed to esteem him; and is it not strange, that the self-justification, which is insufferable to our fellow creatures, should be the foundation of our hope before a holy and heart-searching God?

But, besides, I beseech your attention to the following circumstance: even the false supposition, just now mentioned, proceeds upon an absolute mistake of the nature of moral obligation. There is no proper merit in the obedience of a creature, neither hath it, in the least degree, any title or tendency to extinguish the guilt of crimes. If esteem, love, and obedience, all in the highest degree, be truly and properly due unto God, no reward can be pleaded for on account of the performance, much less can it have the effect of procuring pardon where duty hath been neglected. Let me beg of you to reflect upon a matter of experience, which is but seldom attended to. Does the general goodness of a man's character incline even the world to indulge him in more bad actions than another? It does just the contrary. A man, who hath been eminent in piety during a long course of years, if he goes astray in any one instance, will be more deeply reproached, and his character will suffer more by it, I may even say, it will suffer an hundred-fold more for the same action, than the character of another whose conduct has been more imperfect and unequal.

I look upon it as the duty of a minister to bend his whole force against a disposition to self-righteousness. And, indeed, whether we take it from scripture or reason, we shall see that the hope of a sinner must arise not from extenuation, but confession; not from human merit, but from the divine mercy. This is so plain, that had men but any real and just convictions of their obligations and duty to God, such a plea would never come into their minds. Suppose any person were challenged for a debt which he really owed, and he should answer in this man-

ner, It is very true, I have not paid this; but I paid a debt to you at such a time, and another at such a time, and a third at such a time; would it not be natural for the other to reply, True indeed; but were not all these debts separately due? will your paying one discharge you from another? is not this as much due now as any of the rest were before? If therefore you will give the same justice to your Maker that you expect from another, you must confess that a whole life of perfect and spotless obedience would do just nothing at all to extinguish the guilt of the least sin. Be not therefore so foolish as to rest your hope on that self-righteousness, which, in truth, is no better than filthy rags, and however excellent and perfect it were, could have no effect in procuring the forgiveness of sin.

(4.) There are some to be found, who endeavor to excuse their actual transgressions, as being no more than the necessary effects of original sin. This we find frequently done by those who are no friends to religion in general, and, perhaps, believe as little of the reality of original as the guilt of actual sin. In such, therefore, it is no more than a pretence, that they may rid themselves of the apprehension of both. But there are also some who do not seem to be enemies in principle to the truths of the gospel, who yet are very ready to excuse themselves for particular sins, by laying the blame upon their nature in general. It is my nature, they will say; I have so strong a disposition to it, that I cannot help it. Thus they seem to sit quite easy under the dominion of sin, and, by giving up all hope of overcoming it, are led to forbear all endeavors to resist it.

On this I cannot help observing, again, how opposite the principles of sin and holiness are. The sin of our nature, which, in true penitents, is matter of humiliation and sorrow, is often produced by others, as an extenuation of their crimes. See how the Psalmist David expresses himself, Psal. li. 5. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; "and in sin did my mother conceive me." These words were not spoken by way of alleviation, but confession and aggravation. In the same spirit does the apostle Paul speak

in a great part of the ſeventh chapter of the Epiſtle to the Romans, particularly verſes 14,——24. "For we know "that the law is ſpiritual; but I am carnal, ſold under "ſin. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, "that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do "that which I would not, I conſent unto the law, that it "is good. Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but ſin "that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, "in my fleſh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is pre- "ſent with me; but how to perform that which is good, "I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but "the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do "that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but ſin that "dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would "do good, evil is preſent with me: for I delight in the "law of God after the inward man. But I ſee another "law in my members, warring againſt the law of my "mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin, "which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! "who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?

That there is ſomething myſterious in the firſt occaſion and conveyance of original ſin, on which captious perſons may raiſe cavils, to perplex themſelves and others, I readily allow. But, after all they can ſay, it is certain, both from ſcripture and experience, that all actual ſin is not only perſonal but voluntary. Is there any perſon, who will dare to maintain, in the face of his Supreme Judge, that he is laid under compulſion, or an irreſiſtible neceſſity, to think, ſpeak, or do what is wrong? Does any man commit ſin, but from his own choice? Or is he hindered from the performance of any duty to which he is ſincerely and heartily inclined? If this were indeed the caſe, it would not be true, what we are told in the ſacred oracles, that God will be "juſt when he ſpeaketh, and clear when "he judgeth."

I muſt alſo obſerve, that, upon the plan of the goſpel, the force of this excuſe is entirely taken away; becauſe the rennovation of our natures is there aſcribed to the power and energy of divine grace. Though we are not able to reform our natures, God is able to renew them.

Though we cannot reſiſt corruption, God is able to ſubdue it. Our weak and helpleſs ſtate by nature, is ſo far from being a proper excuſe for ſin, that a juſt and humbling ſenſe of it is the very firſt ſtep towards a recovery. "Of ourſelves, we are not able to do any good thing, but "through Chriſt ſtrengthening us we may do all things." We are exhorted to pray for the influences of the Spirit, in the ſure hope of acceptance: "Aſk, and ye ſhall re-"ceive; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be "opened unto you." So that, on the prevailing of ſin, we have juſt reaſon to take the whole blame upon ourſelves, and to ſay, "We are not ſtraitened in God, but "ſtraitened in our own bowels."

(5.) In the laſt place, ſome are bold enough to excuſe their ſins, as being only the effects of the irreſiſtible will of God, who hath decreed whatſoever comes to paſs; ſome in a more artful and covered way; and ſome more openly and explicitly make uſe of God's abſolute pre-determination of every event, as taking away the guilt of their voluntary actions. This hath been a very old excuſe. It was the ſpirit of that language you find, Ezek. xxxiii. 10. "Therefore, O thou ſon of man, ſpeak unto the houſe of "Iſrael, thus ye ſpeak, ſaying, if our tranſgreſſions and "our ſins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how "ſhould we then live?" The ſame thing is mentioned by the apoſtle Paul, Rom. ix. 19. "Thou wilt ſay then unto "me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath reſiſted "his will?" This infamous and blaſphemous excuſe is not only often made for particular ſins, but is made a pillow of ſloth in general, and ſinners lay themſelves aſleep upon it in ſecurity, ſaying, if it be the will of God, they ſhould be ſaved, the event is infallible, let them take ever ſo deſperate a courſe; and if otherwiſe, it is impoſſible for them to oppoſe his irreſiſtible decree.

In order to oppoſe this profane perverſion of divine truth, let me put you in mind, what ſin and folly it muſt be in us, to ſet the nature of God at variance with his revealed will, or one declaration of his in oppoſition to another. It is from the ſcriptures alone, that you learn God's ſupreme dominion and appointment of every event.

And is it not certain, that the ſame ſcriptures do lay the guilt or ſinfulneſs of every action to the ſinner's charge? Does not God abſolutely refuſe, nay, in infinite condeſcenſion, he ſolemnly proteſts againſt having it imputed to himſelf. Let the guilty hear and tremble, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in "the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from "his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil "ways; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael!" And again, James i. 13. "Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted "with evil, neither tempteth he any man." Perhaps, ſome will ſay, we cannot reconcile the certainty of events with the freedom of actions, or the imputation of guilt. But what is this, but ſaying we are not able to fathom or comprehend the perfections of an infinite God? And is this any cauſe of wonder? It would not be the true God, if you could ſearch him out; it would not be the Almighty, if you could find him to perfection. "It is higher "than heaven, what canſt thou do? Deeper than hell, "what canſt thou know? The meaſure thereof is longer "than the earth, and broader than the ſea."

Surely, my brethren, it is manifeſt, that the ſame God, to whom all his works are known from the beginning of the world, and who rules by his power for ever, hath eſtabliſhed a neceſſary connexion between the means and the end, between the cauſe and effect. And, as it would be altogether madneſs in common life, to ſit ſtill and forbear activity and diligence, under pretence of its being impoſſible to hinder or alter the will of God; ſo it is equally mad and impious, to lay the blame of our ſinful hearts and inclinations on the appointment of God. He can and doth control and over-rule, by his ſovereign providence, all his creatures and all their actions, in a ſubſerviency to his own glory; but, as to the ſinfulneſs of every deed, the ſinner alone is chargeable with it, and in the day of judgment, the ſinner alone muſt anſwer for it.

Before I proceed to the third branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, I muſt beg your attention to a few obſervations on what hath been already ſaid. And,

1ſt, You may obſerve how various and involved, and how deep-laid the excuſes for ſin are. The ways of the world, the general prevalence of ſin, and many of thoſe very circumſtances which ought to make us dread its influence, and fill us with abhorrence of it, are frequently made uſe of to extenuate its guilt. The corrupt inclination of our hearts, which is the ſource of all ſin, and may be ſaid to be the eſſence of ſin, is often made uſe of to excuſe or palliate its effects, as the badneſs of the tree for the ſourneſs of the grapes. How ill qualified are we to judge fairly on ſuch a ſubject? We are partial in our own cauſe, and give an unjuſt deciſion from our relation to the pannel. Down then with the reaſonings of the carnal mind. Suſpect them, dread them, ſhut your ears againſt them. What reaſon is there to ſit down in ſilence, and humbly acquieſce in the account given us of our character, and ſtate, by a God of infinite holineſs? There is no error to blind his judgment, no intereſt to bias his inclination, and there is no equal who may contend or enter into judgment with him.

2dly, You may ſee that the excuſes for ſin, are not only inſufficient, but deeply criminal. In the form they aſſume, they may appear plauſible; but, when they are ſtripped of their diſguiſe, they will appear to be horrible. The immediate pretence may appear to have nothing very atrocious in it; but when they are traced to their ſource, they will be found to take their riſe from the moſt malignant infidelity or atheiſm in the heart. You ſee, from what has been ſaid, that many excuſes for ſin, at laſt, land in laying the blame upon God himſelf. All the encouragement we take in ſin from the divine patience, all our abuſe or perverſion of the gifts of nature, or the courſe of providence, lands ultimately here. Let us therefore pray, that it may pleaſe God to open our eyes on the wonders of his law, on the riches of his grace, and the greatneſs of his power. Let us confeſs, that "to us belongeth ſhame "and confuſion of face; but to our God belongeth mercy." Let us adopt the words of the Pſalmiſt, Pſalm xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from "ſecret faults."

3. I proceed, now, to the third and laſt branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, viz. Its inſinuating nature, by which it leads men on, in an inſenſible manner, from one degree of wickedneſs to a higher, and, after the voluntary commiſſion of ſome ſins, lays them under a ſort of neceſſity of committing more. I think it is probable that the apoſtle had this particularly in his view in the text, where he ſays, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* And certain it is, my brethren, that wicked men do not ſee the whole courſe they are to run at one view, but are drawn in by little and little. Take the moſt abandoned ſinner in this guilty world, and there was a time of his life when he would have trembled to think of the crimes which he afterwards committed. Thus Hazael, King of Syria, when he was told by the prophet Eliſha, of the unnatural barbarity and cruelty he would be guilty of among the children of Iſrael, he could not believe ſo ill of himſelf, but anſwered, with a kind of abhorrence, "What, is thy "ſervant a dog, that he ſhould do this great thing?" But ſuch is the nature of ſin, that it carries men away, if they yield to it, infinitely farther than they themſelves intended. We find this taken notice of by moral writers in every age and country. Many of the ancients uſed to repreſent it by a very expreſſive ſimilitude, viz. that the way of vice lies down hill; ſo that if you take but a few ſteps, the motion is ſoon accelerated, and becomes ſo violent and impetuous, that it is impoſſible for you to reſiſt it.

This is certainly a circumſtance, with reſpect to the nature of ſin, which lies at the foundation of practical religion, and to which I would particularly intreat the attention of the younger part of my audience. Neither is it unſuitable to perſons of any character, as it will contribute to enforce upon their minds, a ſenſe of the neceſſity of conſtant vigilance, and of conſtant prayer. In order to repreſent the matter to you in the ſtronger light, I ſhall endeavor to lay before you ſome of the chief ſteps and gradations by which a ſinner is brought into a hardened ſtate; and ſhow how naturally, and in a manner neceſſarily, they lead him forward from one to another.

(1.) Men enter and initiate themſelves in a vicious practice by ſmaller ſins. Though every ſin hath that malignity in it that it deſerves God's wrath and curſe both in this life and that which is to come, yet there are ſome ſins, which, in themſelves, as well as from ſeveral circumſtances which attend them, are far more heinous in the ſight of God than others. Theſe are too alarming to the conſcience of a young ſinner; and, therefore, he only ventures upon ſuch as are ſmaller at firſt. I hope you will not think it too minute or trifling, if I mention that every particular kind of vice creeps in, in this gradual manner. Many have begun to ſteal, with taking away things without their parents knowledge from their own houſe, thinking there could be little fault in this; and then picked up ſmall things, perhaps, from people of better rank, ſaying to themſeves, they will never be the worſe of it, they can eaſily ſpare it; but time has perfected them in their trade, till they ended their days upon a ſcaffold. Some have begun with little arts of equivocation, and concealing the truth, who, in time, came to boldneſs and obſtinacy in groſs falſehood. And many have begun with levity of carriage, and vanity of dreſs, who have ended in luſt, whoredom, and open proſtitution. My brethren, though we are all born in ſin, and powerfully inclined to that which is evil, from our firſt entrance into the world; yet we have alſo a witneſs for God in our own conſciences. There ſeems to be ſome reluctance in the firſt commiſſion of ſin; ſome ſorrow and regret for departing innocence. It is a ſaying of one of the heathens, "No "man becomes all of a ſudden very wicked!" or, if I may uſe the expreſſion, is made perfect in ſin. It uſually takes ſome time, and is carried on by progreſs and improvement, though ſome, alas! make wonderful proficiency in it, and advance at a very great pace. Theſe leſſer ſins, then, are the introduction and preparation for what afterwards ſhall follow; they begin the attack upon conſcience, which, at laſt, ends in a total overthrow and defeat.

(2.) Let us now follow the ſinner to the next ſtage of his unhappy courſe. Having once begun in the ways of

ſin, he ventures upon ſomething greater and more daring; his courage grows with his experience; and he gives himſelf more liberty to walk in the ways of his own heart, and the ſight of his own eyes. Now, ſins of a deeper dye do not look ſo frightful as before. The reaſon of this is plain, or rather there are many reaſons which concur in producing this effect. Cuſtom makes every thing familiar, even to deſpiſing the authority of God, and counteracting the ſtrongeſt obligations. Sinners, after ſome apprenticeſhip to this infamous trade, commit ſuch ſins as lay waſte the conſcience, and offer the greateſt violence to their own minds; theſe ſtill lead forward to others, and to every new tranſgreſſion, if I may ſpeak ſo, they are driven by a ſtronger inclination, and with-held by a weaker reſiſtance. No ſin comes by itſelf alone, but ſtands in cloſe connexion with many others. Some ſins teach us how to commit others, as well as afford an opportunity to do it. I have heard of a ſervant who went into an apartment with no other intention than to gratify appetite, by making free with ſome ſweet-meats; but happening to ſee ſomething very valuable lying open, which might be eaſily concealed, could not reſiſt the temptation, but commenced thief, and, came, at laſt, to a miſerable end. Many ſins alſo bring others after them, as excuſes to cover them. So that no perſon, who once breaks over the limits of clear and unqueſtionable duty, knows how far he may be carried before he returns back, or rather whether he may not be ſo deeply involved, as never to return at all. This leads me to obſerve,

(3.) That open ſins ſoon throw a man into the hands of ungodly companions. This effect is neceſſary, becauſe they determine his character; and according to the old obſervation, thoſe of like diſpoſition, by a natural and powerful inſtinct, are led to aſſociate together. No ſooner do men begin to take liberties in their conduct, than they begin to ſhun the ſociety of good men; the preſence of ſuch is a reſtraint upon them; their example is a reproof to them, and awakens any principle of conſcience, which yet remains unſubdued, to reproach and ſting them; whereas, in ſociety like themſelves, they are greatly em-

boldened, by seeing vice practised, and by hearing it justified. Behold the sinner, then, with corrupt communication as well as corrupt inclination! The danger of this we are warned of by the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 33. "Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good "manners." As united fires burn the fiercer and the stronger; so a sinful society improves and grows in impiety, and every member joins his brother's pollution to his own. It is not easy to say, how much profane companions are instrumental in reciprocally undoing one another. But surely if those, otherwise virtuous, are often in danger of being led away with the error of the wicked, much more must they who are themselves so disposed, and and are every whit as ready to follow a bad advice or example, as others are to give it.

I cannot forbear adding upon this subject, that seriously disposed persons are as much afraid of the society of loose persons, as they are impatient of theirs. This makes the separation still more complete. And even when they are occasionally joined, the fear of casting their pearls before swine, who may trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend them, often shuts their mouths. It prevents them from giving that salutary instruction, and useful admonition, which their heart might dictate, or the necessity of the case might require. I confess, my brethren, when I consider the unspeakable advantages for true piety, which arise from the relation, the company, or the friendship of eminent Christians, it fills me with the deepest concern for those unhappy persons, who, by their conduct and circumstances, are necessarily deprived of every thing of this kind, nay, are daily exposed to all the contrary snares. I dare say, not a few in this assembly will bear witness, as I desire to do with inward gratitude to God, what infinite benefit arises from the society of the excellent ones of the earth; to have been instructed and trained up by pious parents in the fear of God; to have had your lot cast in a family which was a house of prayer; to have the faithful admonitions of a truly conscientious friend; and to have the daily edifying, restraining, comforting, animating example of an eminent Christian, as

well as a ſhare in his fervent prayers. Nay, I will ſay more, the very precious remembrance of ſuch, after they have entered into reſt, whether parents, children, friends, or neighbors, has the nobleſt and happieſt effect in reproving our ſloth, and ſtirring us up to be "followers of "them, who, through faith and patience, do now inherit "the promiſes." How miſerable thoſe who are wholly ignorant of every ſuch privilege! How deceitful is ſin, which daily adminiſter the moſt deadly poiſon, and, at the very ſame time, cloſes up the way on every ſide, and debars the infected victim from every mean that might contribute to his cure!

(4.) In the next ſtage, the ſinner begins to feel the force of habit and inveterate cuſtom. The frequent repetition of acts of ſin conſtitutes a habit. How powerful this is, and hard to be overcome, experience is a daily ſtanding proof. We are warned of the danger of habitual wickedneſs in many paſſages of ſcripture, particularly Jer. xii. 5. "If thou haſt run with the footmen, and they "have wearied thee, then how canſt thou contend with "horſes? and if, in the land of peace, wherein thou truſt-"edſt, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the "ſwelling of Jordan?" Chap. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethi-"opian change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? then "may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil." Nature itſelf, in this, as in many other inſtances, is full of ſpiritual inſtruction. Habits of any indifferent kind, when once eſtabliſhed, can hardly be overcome even by the greateſt effort of reſolution; even any motion of the body, or any particular word or phraſe in diſcourſe, if once they have taken place by cuſtom, are hardly ever laid down. But, it muſt be obſerved, that habits of ſin are not only infinitely more hurtful than habits of a common kind, but they are alſo much more obſtinate. They fall in with the bent and diſpoſition of corrupt nature; and, therefore, are like a double cord, not eaſily broken.

Behold then the ſinner rooted and ſettled in an evil way! Before, it might have been expected, that an awful diſpenſation of Providence, or the convincing demonſtration of the word of God, might have had an effect upon him;

but now, though it is ſtill poſſible, it becomes leſs and leſs probable. A tree, when it is newly planted, may be eaſily removed, or may be overturned by a blaſt of wind; but, when once it has ſpread its roots in the ground, and long kept its poſſeſſion, the moſt violent tempeſt may bend its top a little, but cannot ſhake its firm foundations. So the ſinner, that has been long habituated to wickedneſs, and confirmed by a long courſe of time, will ſtand even the ſtorms of affliction, and, if they do bend his haughty ſpirit, yet they will not break his ſtubborn heart. I do not mean to ſet bounds to the almighty power and ſovereign grace of God. He, no doubt, may, and, in ſome inſtances, has pluckt the moſt advanced ſinners as brands out of the fire. But theſe inſtances are few and uncommon, for ſome of the great ends of his government. It is not the ordinary way of his dealing with us; and he hath ſufficiently warned us againſt truſting to it. He hath threatened to make the ſinner feel the natural conſequence of obſtinacy, by ceaſing to ſtrive with him, and giving him up to the luſts of his own heart.

It is an awful, but, uſeful leſſon which young perſons may learn from what they ſee in the world about them. Thoſe who have been long habituated to idleneſs, what a hopeleſs thing is it to attempt to bring them to apply? Thoſe who have been long habituated to drunkenneſs and intemperance, or ſenſuality of any kind, we ought not to ſay they are inclined to it, but they are compelled to it by the irreſiſtible calls of theſe appetites which they are no longer able to control. All who obſerve them, are ſo ſenſible of it, that they conſider it, as in vain to ſpeak to them, and think they may juſt as well ſpeak to the wind or the ſtorm: nay, we may often perceive the poor unhappy wretches themſelves ſenſible in ſome meaſure, of their captivity, though unable to break the chains that bind them. Some drunkards have been known to be filled with the deepeſt vexation, and ready to tear their own fleſh, on reflection of their beaſtly condition, and yet drawn, by an irreſiſtble force, to the next temptation——. Nothing can ſet in a clearer light the deceitfulneſs of ſin, than comparing the ſtrength of habits, with the ſlow and

ſilent manner in which they ſteal on. One ſingle act of ſin ſeems nothing; but one after another imperceptibly ſtrengthens the diſpoſition, and enſlaves the unhappy criminal beyond hope of recovery.

(5.) The next ſtage in a ſinner's courſe, is, to loſe the ſenſe of ſhame, and ſin openly and boldly. Sin is, in itſelf, a diſhonorable thing, which hath, in many inſtances, the teſtimony of mankind againſt it, though their practice be on its ſide. Hence comes the veil and covering of hypocriſy. Moſt part of ſins are the works of darkneſs, becauſe they ſhun the light. But, when once a ſinner has come to a certain degree, he throws off every maſk or covering, and ſins in the face of the ſun. He no more ſeeks darkneſs for his evil deeds, but walks as "deſtructi-"on that waſteth at noon-day." The obſerving eyes, and cenſuring tongues of men, are, now, no bar in his way; ſince the ſtrength of inclination and habit is ſuch, that he muſt indulge himſelf, he takes courage, and refuſes to be reſtrained.

The prophet Jeremiah mentions it as an evidence of a high degree of degeneracy in the children of Iſrael, that many of them had loſt all ſenſe of ſhame, Jeremiah vi. 15. "Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomi-"nation? nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither "could they bluſh: therefore they ſhall fall among them "that fall: at the time that I viſit them they ſhall be caſt "down, ſaith the Lord." And, without all queſtion, it is an evidence on an uncommon height of impiety, when even natural ſhame is gone; and whoever are in that condition, have loſt a very powerful fence to virtue. So long as ſhame remains, it is a great draw-back upon them in their licentious practices; but, when it is no more, they are without curb or reſtraint, they *draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and ſin, as it were, with a cart-rope.* And that men are naturally carried to this bold and ſhameleſs impiety, is evident from the very nature of the thing. Repeated acts of ſin, which muſt be known, offend natural modeſty ſo frequently, and accuſtom a man ſo much to ſhame, that he loſes the ſenſe of it in time altogether. Of this we have but too many examples.

(6.) Another ſtage in the ſinner's progreſs, is, to harden himſelf ſo far, as to ſin without remorſe of conſcience. The conſcience of a ſinner, for a long time, bears its teſtimony againſt him, and every outward indulgence coſts him ſome inward uneaſineſs; but, after he hath given himſelf over to abandoned wickedneſs, it frequently ceaſes its reproof. This victory he may obtain two different ways: 1. The eaſieſt and ſpeedieſt way is by hearkening to looſe principles. Theſe, at once, ſet the mind at eaſe, and blunt the reproofs of conſcience. But of this I have ſpoken on a former head. 2. The other way is practical. The frequent repetition of atrocious crimes ſtupifies the conſcience. They, as it were, weary it out, and drive it to deſpair. It is much the ſame with the monitor in our own breaſt, and any friend who has a concern for another; if he finds that inſtruction, admonition, reproach, are all in vain, he, at laſt, looſens the reins, and ſuffers him to take his courſe. Now, what muſt be the condition of a man, who has out-ſinned even his conſcience itſelf? he muſt ſurely be kept within no bounds, but triumph in his miſerable conqueſt. The apoſtle Paul tells us, 1 Tim. iv. 2, of ſome who are guilty of "ſpeaking lies in hypo-"criſy, having their conſcience ſeared with a hot iron." And thus deſcribes the condition of ſome ſinners, Eph. iv. 19. "Who being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over "unto laſciviouſneſs, to work all uncleanneſs with greedi-"neſs." Perhaps, it may be thought ſome degree of comfort to a ſinner to have overcome his conſcience, ſo that he is no more harraſſed with its reproofs. But conſider, I pray you, that all that he hereby gains, is only to be a little farther out of the way of recovery, a little nearer to deſtruction. What avails it, that he has rendered himſelf inſenſible of his danger? This will neither ſcreen him from it, nor make it lighter when it falls. There is ſomething, on the contrary, extremely terrible in the condition of that man who is inſenſible of the judgment awaiting him, and ſtill going on, till he lift up his eyes in torments that ſhall never have an end. But, before this, he has frequently ſome further ſteps to go. Having finiſhed his character, he proceeds to finiſh his work; and, therefore, in the

(7.) Place, Improved ſinners often come to boaſt and glory of their wickedneſs. It is ſomething to be above ſhame; but it is more ſtill to glory in wickedneſs, and eſteem it honorable. Hear what the apoſtle Paul ſays of ſuch, Phil. iii. 18, 19. "For many walk, of whom I have "told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that "they are the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt, whoſe end is "deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, and whoſe glory "is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things." How many are there who have ſtudied to excel each other in the glorious art of debauchery and riot, and then proclaim their own praiſes upon the ſubject! How dreadful and how pernicious a character! for it is never ſeparated from its counterpart, deſpiſing and reproaching true religion, and a ſtedfaſt adherence to its laws. It gives me great concern to ſay, that there is ſo much pains taken amongſt us, to give countenance to profanity; ſo that it requires no ſmall meaſure of courage and reſolution not to be aſhamed of our Maſter's croſs. To what height of wickedneſs are thoſe arrived, who have thus inverted the natural order of things, have maſtered their own judgment, and turned their reaſon upſide down. Glorious ambition indeed! to have made ſuch a progreſs downward toward the brute creation, both as to their bodily appetites and the ſentiments of their minds. There remaineth but one ſtep more for them to take, viz.

(8.) Not to be content with being wicked themſelves, but to uſe all their art and influence to make others ſo too. This is to be zealous in ſinning, and induſtriouſly to promote the intereſt of the infernal cauſe. How often do we find thoſe who have no fear of God before their own eyes, uſe their utmoſt endeavors to extinguiſh it in others, to laugh down the qualms of their conſciences, and break any reluctance they may ſeem to have at running to the ſame exceſs of riot with themſelves? Some are ſo eminent this way that they reſemble the Phariſees who "com-"paſſed ſea and land to make one proſelyte," and when they had made him, they made him "two-fold more the "child of hell than themſelves." So will zealots in vice, compaſs ſea and land to make a proſelyte to the devil. It

is hard to tell to what we ſhould attribute this extraordinary conduct. Is it that they are really perſuaded they have made a wiſe choice, and out of their great generoſity and affection to their brethren are willing to make them partners of their joy? This I am afraid will hardly be believed by any reaſonable man. It is more probable, that as they reſemble in many other reſpects their father the devil, ſo they reſemble him alſo in malice, "going about like "roaring lions, ſeeking whom they may devour." They already begin to feel their miſery by ſin, and deſire to bring as many as poſſible into the ſame condition, as a wretched (and indeed miſtaken) ſource of conſolation in their future wo.

And now to cloſe the ſcene, thoſe who have thus far hardened themſelves ſhall be given up of God to judicial blindneſs of mind, and hardneſs of heart. When this ſentence takes place, they are incapable of mercy, and marked out as veſſels of wrath, fitted to deſtruction. That God ſometimes, in his righteous judgment, lays the ſinner under this awful ſentence, is evident from the following paſſages of ſcripture, Iſa. vi. 10. "Make the heart of this "people fat, and make their ears heavy, and ſhut their "eyes: leſt they ſee with their eyes, and hear with their "ears, and underſtand with their heart, and convert, and "be healed. John xii. 39, 40. "Therefore they could "not believe, becauſe that Eſaias ſaid again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they ſhould "not ſee with their eyes, nor underſtand with their heart, "and be converted, and I ſhould heal them." Rom. i. 28. "And even as they did not like to retain God in their "knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, "to do thoſe things which are not convenient." 2 Theſſ. ii. 11, 12. "And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them "ſtrong deluſions, that they ſhall believe a lie; that they "all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but "had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs." This is always a conſequence of their former obſtinacy. As they deſpiſe and trample upon his mercy, he gives them over to themſelves and the maſters they have choſen; he finiſhes the day of his patience and long-ſuffering, and devotes them to the judgment they deſerve.

And now, my brethren, view (and view it with terror!) the dreadful conſequence of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and by what fatal ſteps it leads on to that hardneſs of heart which is a ſure prelude of eternal miſery. Who that ventures upon the practice of ſin, ever intends to go ſo far? They mean only to take a ſhort trial of the pleaſures of vice; but it gains upon them inſenſibly, and fixes its hold ſtill faſter and faſter, till they are its abſolute ſlaves. I ſhall conclude this illuſtration of the deceitfulneſs of ſin with obſerving, that there is an exact correſpondence between the progreſs of a ſaint in holineſs and meetneſs for heaven, and the progreſs of a wicked man in ſin, and his growing fitneſs and preparation for hell. A new convert finds it hard at firſt to ſeparate himſelf from his ſins, and confine himſelf within the bounds of duty; he has ſome relenting thought towards his luſts, as old companions from which he is to part forever. Juſt ſo a young and unexperienced ſinner finds ſome reluctance at ſin, ſome uneaſineſs from the challenges of conſcience, and painful forebodings of his unknown future fate.——A good man after walking ſome time in the paths of virtue finds the way become ſmoother and eaſier, and ſerves God with greater conſtancy, and with greater pleaſure. Juſt ſo the ſinner finds it more eaſy, through time, to violate his conſcience, does it more frequently, and with leſs remorſe.—A good man ſoon aſſociates himſelf with the excellent ones of the earth, he is inſtructed by their converſation, emboldened by their example, and aſſiſted by their prayers. Juſt ſo the ſinner ſoon finds, or is found out by thoſe who are like him in inclination; they join in confederacy, adopt each others principles, and follow each others practice.——A good man in time is thoroughly confirmed, becomes poſſeſt of a prevailing love to God and holineſs; ſo that it is his very nature, his delight, as well as duty. Juſt ſo the ſinner, in proceſs of time, is governed by his luſts: they acquire that authority over him that they do not ſolicit but demand indulgence.——A good man is fortified in his choice, and deſpiſes the ſmiles and frowns of a corrupt world. Juſt ſo the ſinner lays aſide ſhame, and ſays, nay but I will do that which hath proceeded out

of my mouth.——A good man is filled with concern for the intereſt of religion. Juſt ſo the ſinner eſpouſes the cauſe of profanity, will plead it in his converſation, and ſtrengthen it with his ſubſtance.—In fine, a good man is at laſt raiſed above the world, his heart is in heaven, and he longs to be carried there. Juſt ſo the ſinner fills up the meaſure of his iniquity; the infernal paſſions take poſſeſſion of the whole man, he becomes weary of the earth for the few good men that are in it, and is fully prepared for the language of blaſphemy and deſpair.

II. I proceed now to the ſecond general head, which was to conſider the duty which is founded by the apoſtle on the deceitfulneſs of ſin. viz. mutual exhortation, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day.* This I ſhall do by ſome reflections on the three following particulars. 1ſt, The perſons who are obliged to exhort others. 2dly, The ſeaſon in which this duty is to be performed. And, 3dly, The manner in which it is to be performed, if we hope to do it with ſucceſs.

1. As to the perſons who are obliged to exhort others. It ſeems in this paſſage to be laid upon Chriſtians in general, without any exception, *exhort one another;* and there is little doubt, that it may and ought to be underſtood in the greateſt latitude. This is perfectly conſonant to the ſpirit of true religion, to our relation one to another, and to the conſtant language both of the Old and New-Teſtament. The two great branches of practical religion, the heads of the two tables of the moral law, are love to God and love to man; and as our love to man ought to take its riſe from our love to God, ſo there can be no expreſſion of it more natural, or more neceſſary, than an endeavor to warn them of the deceitful nature and dangerous conſequences of ſin. This is a duty which is founded with the higheſt propriety on the deceitfulneſs of ſin. For as it deludes the ſinner himſelf, often in an inſenſible manner, others may be ſuppoſed to obſerve his condition, and to ſee the impoſition more clearly, and are therefore obliged, by the dictates both of humanity and piety, to awaken him as it were from his lethargy, and admoniſh him of

his danger. Oh, my brethren! conſider how clear and unqueſtionable this duty appears in common matters. Suppoſe any man were to obſerve an apartment on fire, and know of ſeveral perſons ſleeping over it, or near it, in ſecurity, when a few moments delay would wrap them in the flames, what a monſter of injuſtice and barbarity would he be reckoned, if he did not give them immediate notice, that they might flee from the danger. Is the danger of ſin leſs real? Is it leſs terrible? Juſt the contrary. The loſs of ſubſtance, or the loſs of life, by fire in our dwellings, is not once to be compared with having ſoul and body forever tormented in the fire of hell.

Agreeably to this, we find frequent mention of this duty both in the Old and New-Teſtament. It is a precept in the Levitical law, Lev. xix. 17. "Thou ſhalt not "hate thy brother in thine heart; thou ſhalt in any wiſe "rebuke thy neighbor, and not ſuffer ſin upon him." Prov. ix. 8. "—Rebuke a wiſe man, and he will love thee." Phil. ii. 4. "Look not every man on his own things, "but every man alſo on the things of others." Heb. x. 24. "And let us conſider one another to provoke unto "love, and to good works."

There is no doubt, at the ſame time, that this duty, however general, lies with peculiar and heavier obligations on ſome than on others, and varies a little according to the different relations we ſtand in to one another. You will eaſily be ſenſible how much it is the duty of thoſe who have the miniſtry of reconciliation committed to them, who are entruſted with the charge of precious ſouls, to be urgent and earneſt in their exhortations, to all without exception; to be at all proper pains to fit themſelves for awakening the attention, enlightening the underſtanding, and convincing the conſciences of their hearers. It is their duty to do what in them lies, to trace the ſubtil workings and windings of the human heart, and to know the depths of Satan, as the ſcripture expreſſes it, to declare the whole counſel of God, and keep back nothing that is profitable for their hearers. It is not to be denied that you ought to hear them with patience and attention; that they have a right to ſpeak with freedom and boldneſs

to perſons of every rank and character; and that there ought to be a particular fire and edge in their exhortations, ſince they watch for your ſouls as thoſe who muſt give an account unto God.

There is alſo a particular obligation upon ſuperiors of all ſorts, whether in office, as magiſtrates; in ſtation, as perſons of wealth and opulence; in years, as thoſe whom time and experience ſhould have enriched with ſolid wiſdom; in relation, as parents and maſters of families, to be frequent in exhorting others, and warning them of the deceitfulneſs of ſin. It is laid upon them, and expected of them, that they ſhould not live to themſelves, that they ſhould not ſatisfy themſelves with exacting and looking for the reſpect and deference which is their due; but that they ought to exert themſelves, in giving uſeful inſtruction or ſalutary admonition to all who are within their ſphere. Is ſin ſo deceitful? Are the unwary and ignorant ſo eaſily miſled, and ſo hardly recovered? Then ſurely thoſe who ought to excel others in knowledge, ſhould be careful to impart it for the benefit of the weak. Undoubtedly, my brethren, it is not only a Chriſtian, but a noble and amiable character, for thoſe who are exalted above others, to be full of compaſſion to their inferiors, and in their whole converſation breathing a deſire after their ſpiritual good.

But it is alſo plainly a part of Chriſtian friendſhip, even for equals to exhort one another, and kindly to communicate their mutual experience in the ſpiritual life. "The "lips of the righteous (we are told by Solomon) feed ma-"ny." O how rare and difficult a duty! But wherefore ſhould it be either difficult or rare? The Love of God leads to it. The ſtate of your brethren requires it. And ſurely it is neither unpleaſant nor hurtful to him that performs it. I am ſenſible where the difficulty lies. We ſuppoſe there are few who will hear it with patience, or receive it with profit. Alas! my brethren, it is too true, we hear on all hands, complaints, that people will not take advice; that they are but offended, inſtead of being reformed. Perhaps, indeed, this is as much owing to the manner of giving, as to the backwardneſs of receiving

counſel. However, we ſhall allow the objection; and ſince the duty is mutual, I hope it will not be reckoned wandering from the ſubject, if I beſeech you to ſubmit to one anothers exhortation. We all ſtand in need of it; we may all be the better for it. What though it be adminiſtered imprudently or harſhly for the manner; nay, though it may flow from envy, pride, or malice, as the principle; you will loſe nothing by hearkening to the counſel. I do not remember any thing recorded more truly glorious for a monarch, than what we are told of Philip of Macedon, that he heard reproofs not only with patience, but with pleaſure: and I am ſure, there is nothing more like a Chriſtian, than to profit, not only by the admonitions of friends, but by the reproaches of enemies. If they are juſt, reform what is amiſs; if they are probable, abſtain from the appearance of evil: if they are neither the one nor the other, ſubmit to them with patience, as a part of the will of God.

2. I come now to conſider the ſeaſon in which the duty of mutual exhortation is to be performed, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day.* By which we are to underſtand, that it is to be done frequently, and without delay. This, my brethren, will perfectly accommodate the ſubject of this diſcourſe to our preſent ſituation, when entering on another year. We have many admonitions of the quick paſſage of time; and all theſe ſerve to enforce the exhortation of the wiſe man, Eccleſ. ix. 10. "Whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with "thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor know-"ledge, nor wiſdom, in the grave, whither thou goeſt." If any hearer has received a conviction of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, or the duty of mutual exhortation, he ought ſeriouſly to conſider, that the preſent time only is his; that he knoweth not what a day or a night may bring forth; and that delaying or poſtponing what he may do at preſent, is at the poſſible or probable hazard of its being left undone for ever. I beſeech you, my brethren, to make this uſe of the commencement of another year. There is no difference, in one ſenſe, between one day and another, as much of life is ſpent, and as much of our

dying frame is wafted in one day as in another; but our computation and reckoning of revolving years, by the principal feafons, only helps us to mark the conftant, though filent paffage of time, which, like a flowing river, is bearing us all down into the ocean of eternity. Has any of us then a relation, friend, or child, to whofe eternal intereft he defires, or fees it to be his duty to contribute? let him be fpeedy and diligent, whether by inftruction, admonition, example, or even prayer: you know not how fhort a time the opportunity may laft. By and by all thefe relations fhall be diffolved. How many who were with us laft year, are now fleeping in the duft; their ftate irrevocably fixed for eternity, either entered into reft, and happy in their Redeemer's prefence, or referved in chains of darknefs, and looking forward, with defpair and terror, to the general judgment. No warning of the deceitfulnefs of fin there; they know it, and feel it, in inward reproach, and everlafting felf-condemnation. No preaching of the gofpel there; no hope of recovery, or place for repentance there: fo that we may juftly addrefs every hearer of the gofpel, in the words of the apoftle Paul, 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2. "We then, as workers together "with him, befeech you alfo, that you receive not the "grace of God in vain. For he faith, I have heard thee "in a time accepted, and in the day of falvation have I "fuccored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; be- "hold, now is the day of falvation."

I fhall only add, that the deceitfulnefs of fin, and the precarioufnefs of time, are conftderations which ferve greatly to ftrengthen one another. As time waftes, the finner hardens; not only is the feafon paffing away, but the work is becoming ftill more difficult, and, at laft, as I have fhown before, in the courfe of nature, and by the appointment of God, totally impoffible. It is the danger of a hardened ftate, that the apoftle urges; particularly in this paffage, as the argument to diligence, *But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* And, indeed, elfewhere, we are cautioned againft delay, for the fame reafon. Thus, in Pfal. xcv. 7, 8, which is cited a few

verſes after the text, "—To-day, if ye will hear his voice, " harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in " the day of temptation in the wilderneſs."

3. Let us conſider the manner in which this exhortation muſt be given, if we hope to do it with ſucceſs. And, here, I muſt acknowledge, there is ſo great a variety of caſes, that it would be extremely difficult, or almoſt impoſſible, diſtinctly, to enumerate them all, and give the different directions that are ſuited to each; there muſt be a great difference in the manner, according to the end propoſed. Superiors of all ſorts, magiſtrates, miniſters, and heads of families, may, and ought to reprove, both with authority and ſeverity, becauſe the end is not ſingly the reformation of an individual, but the preſervation of others, and the general good: nay, even private Chriſtians may often be called to reprove, in much the ſame manner as a public teſtimony of their abhorrence of ſin: they may have it, chiefly, in view, to ſave or edify the by-ſtanders, by refuting the calumnies of an enemy, bearing down triumphant wickedneſs, or diſgracing an open factor for the devil.

But as I reckon the paſſage of ſcripture, which is the ſubject of my diſcourſe, has an eye, chiefly, to brotherly admonition, for the benefit of the perſon concerned, I ſhall juſt mention ſome of the moſt important directions for doing it with ſucceſs. Theſe ſhall be both negative and poſitive.

1ſt. You ought not to reprove at an uncertainty, upon bare rumor and ſuſpicion. This is what many people have done, and thereby have, in a great meaſure, loſt all the pains they have beſtowed. Where men are reproved in the wrong place, or for what they either are not guilty of, or are much leſs guilty than is ſuppoſed, it often puts them upon ſelf-juſtification, and hardens them againſt all reproof for the time to come.

2dly. It ought not to be done when the offending perſon is in an ill temper to receive it. Though no time ought to be loſt in doing what good we can to our neighbor, eſpecially to the precious ſoul; yet it is worſe than loſing time to attempt it, when he is in a diſpoſition to re-

ject it: for example, it is usually improper presently after the sin is committed, because then the heat is not over, nor the uproar of the passions and affections appeased. Many a domestic reproof is thrown away in this manner. Perhaps, a husband comes home disordered in liquor, and his wife meets him with a surly countenance, and reproachful language; the offence is too recently taken by her to speak with meekness, and the provocation too recently given by him to hear with patience: hence dissensions and quarrels arise; and, perhaps, he is hardened in his sin, by thinking he hath greater cause to be displeased with his wife for the frowardness of her temper, than she has to be displeased with him for his intemperance. On the other hand, it is not improbable, that, by waiting till the return of calmness and reflection, the sin may be set in such a light, as to carry conviction to the conscience, and, by the blessing of God, prove the means of reformation. Many are the admirable remarks of Solomon on this and the like subjects; particularly, Prov. xv. 23. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!"

3dly, We are not to reprove those whom we have reason to believe to be such desperate wretches, that they would be but the more exasperated, and sin in the more daring manner, on account of the reproof. To these it would be no act of love and charity, as it would provoke them to dishonor God still more highly, and so heap still heavier loads of wrath and vengeance on their own heads. It is a saying of Augustine, one of the fathers: 'If we there-'fore abstain from admonishing wicked men, because the 'season does not suffer it, or, we fear, they may become 'worse by it, that seems to be the counsel of charity.' And alas! how many are there, who, when they are reproved for their sins, though very justly, are presently kindled into a rage, fall a blaspheming and railing at piety, and all that profess it, and seem more confirmed than ever in their hatred and opposition to it. Therefore we are expressly warned of the danger of this by Solomon, Prov. ix. 7. "He that proveth a scorner, getteth to him-"self shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, get-"teth himself a blot." And, to the same purpose, our bles-

ſed Saviour, Matt. vii. 6. " Give not that which is holy " unto the dogs, neither caſt ye your pearls before ſwine, " leſt they trample them under their feet, and turn again " and rend you." On the other hand, poſitively, when reproof or exhortation are adminiſtered,

1ſt, It ſhould be made appear, as much as poſſible, to flow from love and affection as its principle. It is plain that this ought to be its principle, in order to its being a duty acceptable to God; and there will be little hope of its ſucceſs with men, unleſs this appear to their conviction. It would, indeed, be greater perfection to profit by the malicious invectives of enemies; but every body will allow, that is not ordinarily to be expected; for this reaſon, all oſtentation and vain glory is carefully to be avoided, and every thing that may look like only affecting ſuperiority; for the ſame reaſon, it ſhould, in all ordinary caſes, be done in as ſecret a manner as circumſtances will permit it. The caſe of public offences, to be ſure, muſt be excepted; concerning which we are told, " Them " that ſin, rebuke before all, that others alſo may fear." But, in other caſes, not only of private injury, but of private ſins, the rule of our Saviour is to be obſerved, Matth. xviii. 15. "—If thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go " and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if " he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother." I cannot ſay all that might be ſaid on this ſubject; but nothing can be of greater importance, than, if poſſible, to ſhow that it flows from love: for, where the offender is truly convinced of this, even though he ſhould not be reformed, it is very ſeldom that he is diſpleaſed. Therefore,

2dly, As it ought to flow from love as the principle, ſo it ought to be conducted with meekneſs in the ſame manner. No railing or reviling expreſſions, which will look like the wounds of an enemy, to deſtroy, and not the balm of a phyſician, to cure. Therefore the Apoſtle gives us advice, in the following terms, Gal. vi. 1. " Brethren, if a " man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual, re- " ſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſs: conſidering " thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted." This laſt expreſſion gives an inimitable beauty to the apoſtolic counſel. Our

own ſins ſhould fill us with compaſſion as much as reſentment againſt ſinners, and ſhould make us take the ſame gentle methods with others that we would wiſh to be taken with ourſelves, if we were in their condition. We are of the ſame nature, liable to the ſame temptations, and, if left of God, may eaſily fall into the ſame miſcarriages. Beſides, as it is moſt ſuitable to our ſtate and character, ſo it is moſt likely to have a proper effect. Meek and gentle admonitions will penetrate the heart, when rough and clamorous reproofs will be rejected and deſpiſed. Thus Solomon ſays, Prov. xxv. 15, " By long forbearing is a " prince perſuaded, and a ſoft tongue breaketh the bone." And, Chap. xv. 1, " A ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath, " but grievous words ſtir up anger."

3dly, Reproof ſhould be given with ſome degree of zeal as well as meekneſs; we ſhould avoid the extreme of remiſſneſs as well as ſeverity. A ſlight careleſs reproof is often worſe than none; for it is ready to make the offender think lightly of his own offence. There muſt, therefore, be ſuch evident weight and concern of ſpirit, as may ſerve to evidence as well his danger as your own love. For this reaſon, I beg leave to obſerve, that ſpeaking in a way of jeſt, and merriment, on ſins of an atrocious nature is deeply criminal, and highly pernicious. Solomon tells us, " Fools make a mock at ſin." Though a turn to raillery and pleaſantneſs of temper is reckoned a very harmleſs as well as agreeable diſpoſition; yet great care ought to be taken of the ſubjects on which it is exerciſed. It is only ſmaller weakneſſes that ought to be treated in this manner. Sins againſt God ſhould be treated with a gravity and ſerioufneſs from the importance of their nature and effects. I ſhall give an inſtance of this. Swearing, and taking the name of God in vain, is ſometimes ridiculed, inſtead of being reproved. This ſeldom has a good effect. The crime is of ſo atrocious a nature, and ſo direct an aſſault upon the majeſty of God, that it ought not to be treated lightly, as only a ſmall indecorum, or breach of good manners. It ought, indeed, to be deſpiſed for its folly; but at the ſame time it ought to be deeply abhorred for its guilt.

4thly, In the laſt place, In admoniſhing one another for particular ſins, we ſhould ſtill keep in view the ſource of all ſin, a polluted nature; and the great danger of the ſinner, as in a ſinful ſtate. Though particular miſcarriages may give the occaſion, it is of ſmall moment to convince them of the folly of ſuch or ſuch a practice, unleſs you point out to them the neceſſity of repentance, in general, upon evangelical principles. I have rarely ſeen that any arguments were ſufficient to reform a ſinner of any particular fault he was once addicted to, but thoſe drawn from eternity, and the awful effects of the diſpleaſure of a holy God. Preſent inconveniencies, however great, ſoon loſe their effect, and are quite unequal to combat a vicious inclination, or wreſtle with the power of habit. But, though it were otherwiſe, what a ſmall matter is it to cure a man of being a drunkard, or a ſwearer, or a whoremonger, if ſtill you leave him a ſlave to ſin, upon the whole, a ſervant of the devil, and an heir of hell? It is plainly with a view to the final conſequences of ſin, that the Apoſtle recommends mutual exhortation in this paſſage, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called, to-day; leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* Would you, therefore, admoniſh any perſon to his real profit? make uſe of particulars, to convince him of the evil of all ſin, as ſuch, and its power and influence over him by nature. When you reprove him for any fault he has committed, ſhew him the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and where, if he do not ſpeedily ſtop, he will be landed at laſt. Let his eternal ſtate be the motive that urges you to the duty, and let the ſame great conſideration be made uſe of to carry home the inſtruction with power and efficacy upon his heart.

5thly, In the laſt place, Let thoſe who would acquit themſelves of this duty, in a proper manner, be particularly watchful and circumſpect in their own conduct. It is evident, that nothing can be more unſuitable, than for thoſe, who take upon them to admoniſh others, to be groſsly and viſibly blameable themſelves. It is, indeed, ſo intolerable, that nobody can bear their inſtructions with patience. You know, from daily experience, that recri-

mination is the firſt thing to which thoſe who are reprehended betake themſelves. The moment they are challenged, the reply is ready, Why, you yourſelf, do ſo and ſo, or, perhaps, worſe. So prone are they to this, that many times they will upbraid men with innocent or lawful things, as if they were faults, to cover their own guilty practice. Now, if this is the caſe, how much more hurtful muſt it be for thoſe, who reprove others, to be really liable to juſt accuſation themſelves, and, perhaps upon the ſame ſubject? Therefore our Saviour ſays, with the greateſt ſtrength and propriety, Luke vi. 41, 42, "And "why beholdeſt thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, "but perceiveſt not the beam that is in thine own eye? "Either, how canſt thou ſay to thy brother, Brother, let "me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou, "thyſelf, beholdeſt not the beam that is in thine own eye? "Thou hypocrite, caſt out firſt the beam out of thine own "eye, and then ſhalt thou ſee clearly to pull out the mote "that is in thy brother's eye?" Perhaps, my brethren, ſome of you are ſaying within yourſelves: Alas! you have now deſtroyed the whole effect of what has been urged, at ſo great length, on the duty of mutual exhortation; for where is the man that is without ſin, to reprove his neighbor? My brethren, no doubt we have all ſuch failings as ought to make us do it with meekneſs and ſelf-denial; yet ſurely we both may and ought to walk ſo circumſpectly, as not to be juſtly liable to heavy accuſations. Though there is no holding of intemperate tongues, yet, ſurely, there is ſuch a thing as a converſation becoming the goſpel, which will entitle the ſervant of Chriſt to appear with ſome meaſure of courage in his maſter's cauſe; nay, and ſuch an habitual love of mankind, as may ſometimes open their ears to his ſalutary counſel. And, believe it, thoſe who begin to make conſcience of their duty to their neighbor, either in a family, or a wider ſphere, will find its powerful and happy influence as a reſtraint upon their own conduct. They will be naturally led to double their diligence, leſt their example ſhould unhappily fruſtrate the effect of their reproofs.——One particular more I muſt add, that the next thing to being always in the right, is to

be humble, and ready to confeſs when you have been in the wrong. This alſo is a ſcripture precept, James v. 16, "Confeſs your faults one to another, and pray one for "another, that ye may be healed." I am perſuaded that few things would add greater weight to any perſon's admonitions, than his being willing to confeſs, and ready to amend, any thing that was pointed out to him as blameable in his own conduct.

I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical application of what has been ſaid. And,

1. From what has been ſaid, you may ſee the great corruption and depravity of our nature. I look upon it as of great moment to have a deep and growing conviction of this truth. It is the language of ſcripture, it is the language of experience, and it is the parent of humility. I obſerved, in the beginning of my diſcourſe on this ſubject, and it appears from every thing that has been ſaid upon it, that the deceitfulneſs of ſin is but another expreſſion for the treachery of the human heart. In vain would the objects of ſin appear before us; in vain would Satan and his emiſſaries preſent their ſolicitations, if our own inclination did not plead powerfully in their favor. To be deeply convinced of this, will lead to the exerciſe of penitence, and to ſelf-denial, which is the beſt mean of our ſupport and preſervation. If the deceitfulneſs of ſin lies chiefly in ourſelves, that man will guard againſt it in the moſt effectual manner, who has learned to fear himſelf as his own greateſt enemy.

2. From what has been ſaid, let us be led to ſtrictneſs and frequency in ſelf-examination. If ſin is ſo deceitful, it may eaſily lurk unobſerved. Self-knowledge is a ſtudy of as great difficulty as importance. You have heard what artful diſguiſes ſin puts on, and how dreadfully ſome have been led aſtray. The very beſt duties may be polluted by ſinful motives, and the very worſt things may be done by an erring conſcience, of which we may juſtly ſay, with our Saviour, Matth. vi. 23, "—If therefore the light "that is in thee be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs!" The old heathen precept, "Know thyſelf," was reckoned

ſo excellent a ſaying, that they ſuppoſed it to be a revelation from Heaven. And, in the holy Scriptures, we have many exhortations to ſelf-examination. I ſhall only mention that of the apoſtle Paul, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine "yourſelves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own "ſelves: know ye not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus "Chriſt is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Nay, after all our pains to examine ourſelves, there ought to remain ſuch a ſuſpicion of our own treachery, as ſhould make us intreat, humbly and earneſtly, the more impartial trial of a heart-ſearching God, Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can "underſtand his errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret "faults." Pſal. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O God! "and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: "and ſee if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me "in the way everlaſting."

3. From what hath been ſaid, let me beſeech all, but eſpecially young perſons, to beware of the beginnings of ſin. It may be ſaid of ſin, in general, as Solomon ſays of ſtrife, "the beginning of it is like the letting out of water." Beware of all that diſcourſe which tends to give you ſlight thoughts of any ſin. Sometimes men conſider ſins as ſmall ſins, and therefore tolerable. Many parents have thought it wrong to check their children for the follies and levities of youth, and have found, to their melancholy experience, that when follies had been ſuffered to ripen into crimes, they had taken too deep hold to be rooted up. Many make light of ſin by compariſon. How common is the pretence of the drunkards: We are harming nobody; we are not ſpeaking ill of our neighbors; we are not oppreſſing the poor. In the mean time, they are ſoon led to curſing and blaſphemy; and, perhaps, by their riotous living, they are unable to pay their juſt debts, rob the induſtrious poor of their right, and, for the indulgence of a beaſtly appetite, bring their own offspring to beggary and ruin. Such is the behavior of many of your harmleſs people; men of ſocial friendly diſpoſitions, that, if you believe them, would not wrong their neighbor of a farthing to their knowledge; and yet it would be happy for any man to fall into the hands of highway robbers, rather than

into their ſociety. How ſhort-ſighted men are! they not only forget to look forward to the other world, but look not even to any diſtance in this. From time to time we are made fools by ſin, which never aſks more of us than the preſent compliance; yet, if this is granted, never leaves us till our ſtate is irrecoverable. What reaſon have all to be afraid of that deplorable hardneſs of heart which is the conſequence of the continued indulgence of ſin. Let us never conſider any ſin by itſelf, but together with that ugly train which it draws behind it; and, then, though our falſe hearts might plead for the indulgence of a ſingle luſt, they may not be ſo willing to ſubmit to that deluge of vice which follows faſt at its heels.

4. In the laſt place, I ſhall cloſe the ſubject, by addreſſing an exhortation to thoſe of my hearers, who have been long and hardened ſinners; who have many habits of vice cleaving to them; who have hitherto deſpiſed the goſpel, and even ſat in the ſeat of the ſcornful. No doubt, you have heard, in vain, and, perhaps, with contempt, many exhortations of this kind before; and therefore, there is, humanly ſpeaking, but little hope, that any thing I can ſay will have the effect. However, as our bleſſed and gracious Maſter has commanded his goſpel to be preached to every creature, this Prince of the kings of the earth is able, by his Spirit accompanying the word, to lay the proudeſt and the boldeſt of his enemies proſtrate at his feet; let me beſeech you, in his name, to hear, that your ſouls may live. Why will you longer continue at enmity with him, while he is offering you mercy? Nay, he is treating you with mercy in every inſtance of his kind providence, in the renewed meſſages of his bleſſed word, and in his dying agonies on the accurſed tree! Have you been long wedded to ſin? he is able to ſet you free; he came to deſtroy the works of the devil, and is able to knock off the ſtrongeſt fetters, and reſtore liberty to the moſt ſorrowful captive. "We, then, as workers together with him, "beſeech you alſo, that ye receive not the grace of God in "vain." Remember, on the other hand, I beſeech you, the dreadful vengeance that awaits the deſpiſers of the goſpel. If you ſtill refuſe the gracious offer; if you will not

ſuffer his mercy to be glorified in your recovery, his holineſs, power, and juſtice, ſhall be illuſtrated in your perdition. Time is haſtening away; judgment is haſtening on; no refuſing to appear at that bar; no deceiving or biaſſing that judge; no room to eſcape; no ſource of conſolation under that ſentence. How inſupportable the reflection on opportunity irrecoverably loſt! And how terrible the ſanction which follows upon the offer of mercy! You may read it, Prov. i. 24,——31. "Becauſe I have "called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, "and no man regarded: but ye have ſet at nought all my "counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo will "laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear "cometh. When your fear cometh as deſolation, and "your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs "and anguiſh cometh upon you. Then ſhall they call "upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me "early, but they ſhall not find me: for that they hated "knowledge, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord. They "would none of my counſel; they deſpiſed all my re-"proof: therefore ſhall they eat of the fruit of their own "way, and be filled with their own devices."

I only add, if any impreſſion is made on your minds, of the importance of eternity, ſuffer it to abide there. Let it have an immediate effect. Of all the deceits of ſin or Satan, none more fatal than that of putting off convictions to a more convenient ſeaſon. I conclude, therefore, with the words of Solomon, Eccleſ. ix. 10. "Whatſoever thy "hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is "no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in "the grave whither thou goeſt." Amen.

THE BELIEVER GOING TO GOD AS HIS EXCEEDING JOY.

SERMON 20.

PSALM xliii. 4.

Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.

IT is of great moment to attend to the proper mixture of reverence and love which ought to poſſeſs our hearts in the worſhip of the living God. If they ariſe from proper principles, they will not deſtroy or weaken, but ſtrengthen one another. A believer can never lye too low in the duſt before the moſt holy God; he can never be too ſenſible either of his diſtance as a creature, or his guilt and unworthineſs as a ſinner: but, at the ſame time, he can never be too deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of divine love, or have too ſtrong and ardent deſires after communion and fellowſhip with God. The truth is, the lower we are in our own ſight, it doth but the more illuſtrate and magnify all the grace that is ſhewn to us in the goſpel: and the more joyfully we contemplate the fulneſs of our portion in an infinite God, it will but the more bring back this reflection, and conſtrain us to confeſs, that we are leſs than the leaſt of all his mercies.

In ſeveral paſſages of the Pſalms of David, we have very warm and fervent expreſſions of the delight which the man after God's own heart had in the worſhip of his ſanc-

tuary. There are few of these more beautiful and forcible than the passage of which my text is a part, "O send "out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them "bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. "*Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my ex-* "*ceeding joy.*" That which seems to have brought the Psalmist to this striking and beautiful thought, was, his being under the pressure of heavy affliction; and, particularly, in a state of distance and banishment from the temple service. This led him to flee for refuge to God, his almighty friend and unchangeable portion. Did the Psalmist then go to God as his consolation in distress? What reason is there for every Christian to go to him as his Father and his God, not only for support under the various trials of this mortal state, but for happiness and peace after he hath seen and felt the inherent vanity of every created enjoyment?

All I shall further add upon the words is, that what David is here praying for, is to be brought to the temple of God, to have access to his courts, and communion with him there. This he plainly looks upon as a source of exceeding joy; and, surely, to those who are duly disposed for it, there is not, there cannot be, in this world, a more delightful employment than the joint celebration of our Creator and Redeemer's praise; than the united voice of his servants in his temple. It is the nearest approach we can make to the employment of heaven, and the most sensible foretaste we can have of its happiness in this foreign land.

But, my brethren, I must limit the subject to what is the particular and distinguishing employment of this day, —the holy ordinance of the Lord's supper, commemorating our Redeemer's dying love. This was called by the ancients the *Eucharist*, or *Sacrifice of Praise*. And, indeed, no disposition is more proper or necessary, in attending upon it, than a joyful and thankful frame of spirit. This will be like a precious perfume, which will fill the house with its fragrance, and will greatly strengthen every other gracious disposition; and, therefore, my intention is, through the assistance of divine grace,

I. To ſhew you what matter of joy and ſatisfaction there is to every ſincere Chriſtian, in what is repreſented to our view in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper; or, for what reaſons we ought, in this ſolemn ſervice in a particular manner, *to go to God as our exceeding joy.*

Having done ſo, I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place, then, I am to ſhew you what matter of joy and ſatisfaction there is to every ſincere Chriſtian, in what is repreſented to our view in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper; or for what reaſons we ought in this ſolemn ſervice, in a particular manner, *to go to God as our exceeding joy.* I am deeply ſenſible, my brethren, that I have entered on a taſk to which I am very unequal, to raiſe your minds to that ſublime temper, of joy in God, and to diſcloſe that fountain of joy there is to every believer, in what his Redeemer has done, and is ſtill doing for him. It is ſo great a ſubject, that we ourſelves may ſee how unfit a mortal tongue is to ſpeak of it: and therefore, I ſhall, in the entry, pray "that God may ſhed "abroad his love in our hearts; that he may ſend forth "his light and his truth, that they may be guides to us." and accompany the word ſpoken with the powerful energy of the ſpirit of conſolation. But a little of that real communion with God which is the work of his Spirit, and which he ſometimes vouchſafes to his people, will give them ſuch a lively ſenſe of his love and joy in him, as they themſelves know may be felt, but cannot be expreſſed: and I cannot forbear already obſerving to you, that the meaneſt real Chriſtian ſhall, one day, in the higher houſe, have ſuch a fulneſs of joy, and ſuch conceptions of God and his Redeemer's love, that he ſhall look down, with wonder, at the weak and imperfect ſtretches of our imagination after it now: But ſo long as we are here, let us patiently content ourſelves with what is given us as neceſſary to ſupport our weary ſteps in this deſolate wilderneſs; with what this ordinance, inſtituted for enlivening our faith, ſupplies us for our comfort and joy.

For this purpose, let me beg your attention to the following considerations.

1. You ought to go to God, in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy*, because, in it, you have the fullest assurance and the clearest evidence of the forgiveness of your sins, and peace with your offended Maker. This is the preliminary mercy, which, with respect to fallen creatures, must open the way to every other blessing. Nothing so much damps our joy in God, and lessens our satisfaction in addressing him, as conscioufness of guilt. This it is that makes religion so unpleasant to the carnal worldling; even the secure sinner, who seems to walk without fear, is yet deterred by natural conscience from drawing near to God. He does all in his power to rid his mind of the thoughts of God's ordinary and constant presence with him in every place. A horror of his Maker possesses his mind at all times; he cannot love him as a gracious Father, because he hates him as an enemy, and fears him as a righteous judge. Nay, the same thing it is that makes us all feel so frequently an aversion at the duties of religion. The cold hand of a spirit of bondage freezes up the affections. Trembling and fear taketh hold upon us. An inward dread and jealousy of our own state throws a gloom and darkness, as it were, through the temple of God. And, with whatever strength or beauty the promises or privileges of the saints may be set forth, there is a secret restraint upon us, and as a voice discharging us from touching them, as forbidden fruit. Were we but as pure, and free from guilt, we should, with as much joy and satisfaction, draw nigh to God, as the angels do in Heaven.

I have been the more full in opening this to you, that you may see the foundation there is in nature, and in fact, for the leading doctrine of the gospel, "Christ Jesus set "forth as a propitiation for sins, through faith in his "blood."

His blessed body was broken, and his precious blood was shed, for the remission of sins. Are you to commemorate this? are you to receive the visible signs and the appointed seals of it? does not this assure you, that your sins are forgiven for Christ's sake? Are your sins very

great? are they many in number, and heinous in their aggravations? Conſider the infinite value of this ſacred blood. It was no leſs than that of the eternal Son of God, who chearfully undertook our cauſe: "and the Lord laid "on him the iniquity of us all." Iſa. liii. 5. "He was "wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our "iniquities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him; "and with his ſtripes we are healed." O unſearchable myſtery! O the infinite holineſs of God! O the tremendous juſtice of God! How well may the exhortation be preſſed, Iſa. i. 18. "Come now, and let us reaſon toge-"ther, ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they "ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crim-"ſon, they ſhall be as wool." Well may we ſay with the apoſtle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful ſaying, and "worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into "the world, to ſave ſinners, of whom I am chief." Are you afraid of the condemning ſentence of the law, Gal. iii. 13. "Chriſt hath redeemed us from the curſe of the "law, being made a curſe for us." Are you aſhamed to appear before God in your own undeſerving character, hear, and comply with your Saviour's own counſel, Rev. iii. 18. "I counſel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, "that thou mayeſt be rich, and white raiment that thou "mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs "do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-ſalve, "that thou mayeſt ſee." In the ſpotleſs robes of your Redeemer's righteouſneſs, you ſhall be adorned for the courts of your God, and dwell in his preſence. Are you afraid to apply all this to yourſelves? This is the expreſs purpoſe of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, to confirm and cloſe the covenant of peace with every partaker. Do you doubt the ſincerity of the offer upon God's part? See him diſpenſing the healing medicine, "This is my body, which "was broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye "do ſhew the Lord's death till he come." Hear him ſaying, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labor, "and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt." Hear him further ſaying, John vi. 37. "Him that cometh to

" me, I will in no wife caſt out." Iſa. lv. 1. " Ho, every " one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters; and he that " hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy " wine and milk, without money, and without price." Rev. xxii. 17. " And the Spirit and the bride ſay, Come; " and let him that heareth ſay, Come; and let him that " is athirſt, come. And whoſoever will, let him take " the water of life freely." All who have truly groaned under a ſenſe of guilt may here ſee their pardon ſealed, and may and ought to rejoice in it, as theirs; and, unleſs they doubt the faithfulneſs of God's word, or the efficacy of their Saviour's merit, may triumph in both, and ſet at defiance the thunders of the law, the reproaches of conſcience, and the accuſations of the devil. They may ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, Rom. viii. 33, 34, " Who ſhall lay " any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that " juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt " that died, yea rather, that is riſen again, who is even " at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion " for us."

2. You ought to go to God in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy*, as it affords the ſtrongeſt and moſt illuſtrious proof of divine love. This, my brethren, is the immediate ſubject of our contemplation in the Lord's ſupper; and I chuſe to conſider it as an argument by itſelf, ſeparately from its fruits, becauſe nothing ſerves more to heighten our affection to, and delight in God, than a firm perſuaſion of his love to us. Is it a comfortable thing to have the pardon of our ſins? It is alſo unſpeakably refreſhing, and even raviſhing, to view, in faith, the wonderful means by which it is accompliſhed. We may conſider, ſhortly here, the riches of redeeming grace, as extending to the ſinners of Adam's race in general; and then what it is for every believer to conſider himſelf as the determinate object of divine regard in the councils of peace. The whole perfections of an infinite God ſhine with united luſtre in the work of redemption. His power, wiſdom, holineſs, and juſtice, are ſeverally and jointly illuſtrated in it. His unſearchable wiſdom is mentioned, Rom. xi. 33. " O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and

" knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judg-
" ments, and his ways paſt finding out!" His mighty power, Eph. i. 19. " And what is the exceeding great-
" neſs of his power to us-ward, who believe, according to
" the working of his mighty power." The righteouſneſs of his government, Rom. iii. 26. " To declare, I ſay, at
" this time, his righteouſneſs, that he might be juſt, and
" the juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus." But love is moſt conſpicuous of all: and is therefore moſt frequently inſiſted on, John iii. 16. " God ſo loved the world,
" that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever be-
" lieveth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting
" life." Rom. v. 8. " God commendeth his love towards
" us, in that while we were yet ſinners, Chriſt died for
" us." Eph. iii. 17, 18, 19. " That Chriſt may dwell in
" your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and ground-
" ed in love, may be able to comprehend, with all ſaints,
" what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,
" and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth know-
" ledge." And indeed, my brethren, it paſſeth the power of man to open fully the greatneſs of the love of God to ſinners in Chriſt Jeſus. It is a ſubject which we are ſo far from being able now to exhauſt, that it ſhall afford matter for adoring inquiry to all eternity, whilſt the everlaſting God lives and reigns with his ſaints, and unfolds to them, age after age, more ample views of his goodneſs and greatneſs. By what ſhall we meaſure the love of a friend, but by the greatneſs of his gifts? What ſentiment then ſhall we entertain of the love of God for his (juſtly ſtyled) unſpeakable gift? He has given us his only begotten Son, "who was from eternity in the boſom of the
" Father; the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the ex-
" preſs image of his perſon;" the beſt and greateſt of created beings, nay, the whole creation itſelf, had been nothing compared to it.

The truth is, I am ready to think that there ſeems to be ſomething like divine contrivance, and infinite deſign, in this particular circumſtance. All created things are in themſelves equal, and alike eaſy, to the power of God, being but the effects of his ſimple will. For this reaſon

there could be no comparative greatneſs in any ſuch gifts. There was therefore but this one way left to expreſs an uncommon degree of love, that he who was one and equal with the Father, ſhould himſelf be employed in the meſſage, and "bear our ſins in his own body, on the tree." Nothing elſe could have made man an expenſive purchaſe. Nothing elſe that God could beſtow, would have had any appearance of doing violence to himſelf; or could give meaning and beauty to that expreſſion, Romans viii. 32. "He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up "for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us "all things?" The Lord of the vineyard, in the parable, is repreſented as in ſuſpenſe, how to fall upon a method to break the ſtubbornneſs of the huſbandmen, Luke xx. 13. "Then ſaid the Lord of the vineyard, what ſhall I do? I "will ſend my beloved Son, it may be they will reverence "him when they ſee him." Let us paraphraſe and apply it. God, who bears the perſon of the maſter of the vineyard, may be ſuppoſed to ſay, what ſhall reclaim theſe obſtinate children of mercy, become rebels? Nothing but the invincible force of ſuperior love. But wherein ſhall the love of the eternal God appear to advantage? in nothing but an eternal gift: they ſhall not be cheaply purchaſed, they ſhall be bought with blood, with that ſacred blood, which ſhall be the ſurpriſe of angels, and the wonder of heaven. Theſe reflections I would make with reverence, on this elevated and delightful, but awful and tremendous theme. One thing appears clearly from them, that it is not only obſcuring the luſtre, not only weakening the force, but deſtroying the very being of redeeming love, to deny the proper and eternal Godhead of Chriſt, the Mediator. But, Oh! my brethren, what an improvement is it, to the contemplation of the love of God, for each of us to conſider himſelf as having been from eternity the object of it. While I taſte the ſtreams of his bounty, may I thus trace it back to its ſource! Did he love me from the foundation of the world! Did he pity me, when in unprovoked rebellion againſt him! Did he make ſo gracious proviſion for my recovery and ſalvation! Did he make atonement for my guilt, by the blood of his

own Son! and conquer my heart by the power of his sovereign grace! What returns of praise and gratitude are his due? With what joy ought I to remember my Redeemer's death at his table, in the hope of sharing with him his crown and his throne, in a higher state?

3. You ought to *go to God*, in this ordinance, *as your exceeding joy;* as you have in it the clearest and fullest assurance of receiving from him all that is necessary for your comfort and happiness, while you continue here. There are, in a strict sense, but two ends of going to God in his worship and ordinances, to express our sense of, and thankfulness for favors received, and as beggars for more. Now, my brethren, in this ordinance you are not only called to celebrate the love of a gracious and reconciled God, but to trust in the fulness of an all-sufficient God. That we may view this the more distinctly, there are these two kinds of blessings we stand in need of, those that relate to our spiritual life, and those that relate to our temporal comfort.

1st. Those that relate to the spiritual life. What is the great desire of every real servant of God in this house? Is it not to have your hearts more inflamed with the love of God, and more devoted to his fear? Is not sin your greatest burthen, and its remaining influence your greatest grief? Now, where can you have a more reasonable hope of getting your gracious dispositions strengthened, or your sins mortified, than at a communion table? Is it not expressly designed for your spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace? And as the institution of these sensible signs is a remarkable proof of divine condescension, so I can hardly conceive any thing more wisely and happily calculated for this excellent end. What can more strengthen your faith in a dying Saviour, than being allowed to look upon the signs of his broken body, and his blood poured out? What can speak greater peace to the conscience, than your being allowed and invited to receive him explicitly? "This is my body, broken for you." What can more happily serve to kindle and inflame your love to God, than the immediate contemplation of his infinite love for you? Where can you take such a hateful view of sin, as a detested object, as at the Lord's table,

where you see it in your Saviour's sufferings? Where and how can you lay such a bond upon the conscience, as by receiving the seals of this sacred engagement? How can you give such a deadly wound to your strongest lusts, as by nailing and affixing them to your Redeemer's cross? What motive of future obedience equal to bearing about in your bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus? See what the apostle says, 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for "all, then were all dead." Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified "with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ "liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, "and gave himself for me." What remedy can you find for your own weakness, like the all-sufficiency of Christ? Col. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the God-"head bodily." 1 Cor. i. 30. "Of him are ye in Christ "Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righte-"ousness, and sanctification, and redemption." I will not so widely handle the subject as to cite to you all the passages which show that the spirit of sanctification is a part of the purchase of your Redeemer, and one of his gifts to those who humbly implore it. Is it not well known, and do not believers at his table, sensible of their own weakness, and confident of their Saviour's power, get their feet upon the necks of their enemies, and say, "I "can do all things through Christ strengthening me."

2d. They have here all things necessary for their temporal comfort. They have a complete remedy for their cares, as well as their sins. As at the Lord's table you lay hold of the covenant of peace, so there, if any where, you may see, that it is ordered in all things, and sure; your food and raiment, and all necessary provision, is contained in it; and Christ's body is the pledge. How gracious the promise! your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things, Psal. xxxiv. 8, 9, 10. "O taste and "see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man that trust-"eth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints! for there "is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do "lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord,

" ſhall not want any good thing." Iſa. xxxiii. 16. " He " ſhall dwell on high; his place of defence ſhall be the " munitions of rocks; bread ſhall be given him, his water " ſhall be ſure." Deliverance from ſuffering is contained in it, Pſal. xxxiv. 19. " Many are the afflictions of the " righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Strength and grace to ſuffer with patience is contained in it, Iſa. xliii. 2. " When thou paſſeſt through the waters, " I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they ſhall " not overflow thee; when thou walkeſt through the fire, " thou ſhalt not be burnt, neither ſhall the flame kindle " upon thee." The ſanctified uſe and improvement of ſuffering is contained in it, Rom. viii. 28. " And we " know that all things work together for good to them that " love God, to them who are the called according to his " purpoſe." 2 Cor. iv. 16. " For which cauſe we faint " not; but though our outward man periſh, yet the inward " man is renewed day by day." Conſider, eſpecially, that at the Lord's table you have an immediate view of the great foundation of reliance on divine Providence, Rom. viii. 32. " He that ſpared not own Son, but delivered " him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?" 2. That God, who was ſo laviſh of his love, as not to ſpare even his own Son, but gave him up to be deſpiſed, buffeted, and crucified for you, will not be ſo inconſiſtently hard, as to refuſe the ſmall gift in compariſon of a little earthly good. He whoſe ſoul was redeemed by the blood of Chriſt ſhall not loſe his body for a little bread.

I cannot help obſerving, here, of what univerſal uſe and benefit the doctrine of Chriſt crucified is, and how high a place it ought to hold in our eſteem. It is not only uſeful for aſſuring us of the pardon of ſin, but makes us ſuperior to all thoſe ſufferings, of every kind, which took their riſe from ſin. The path of a Chriſtian is ſometimes thorny and difficult; and many of the weaker order of ſaints have even a greater ſenſibility of the inconveniencies of life than ſome thoughtleſs ſinners. Theſe laſt maintain a ſort of buſtle and conteſt for worldly pleaſure, and, with a ſturdy ſelf-ſufficiency, can, if I may ſpeak ſo, return the blows

and buffets of adverſe fortune, while the feeble of Chriſt's flock become ſunk and heartleſs under a frowning Providence. But is not the Lord's table a place of refuge? and is it not matter of experience, that they have found conſolation there? Whatever their complaints have been, whether of ſickneſs, or poverty, or loſs of relations, or the ſlanders of their enemies, they have adored the ſovereign will of God in them all; they have been brought to a placid ſubmiſſion to his providence in them all; nay, they have happily ſeen and confeſſed his wiſe and merciful purpoſe in them all. It was not without a view to his trials, that the Pſalmiſt, in the text, deſires to *go unto the altar of God, unto God his exceeding joy.* And you may ſee how he expreſſes himſelf in the following verſe, "Why art "thou caſt down, O my ſoul! and why art thou diſquiet-"ed within me! hope in God; for I ſhall praiſe him, "who is the health of my countenance, and my God!"

4th. I come, now, in the laſt place, to obſerve, that this ordinance is a ſource of joy, as it is a pledge and earneſt of heaven; a foretaſte of that eternal happineſs which God hath prepared for his faithful ſervants in the world to come. This, my brethren, ought never to be out of our view while we ſojourn in this valley of tears.

This eternal joy is what our Redeemer has given us the fulleſt aſſurance of. It is he who hath drawn aſide the curtain, and opened to us a joyful proſpect into the holy of holies, into the bleſſed manſions of perfection, purity, and happineſs within the vail. In one of his laſt diſcourſes to his diſciples, when he was about to leave them, he tells them, it was to be but a ſhort ſeparation; for that he would come again, and carry them with him; and that they ſhould never more be divided, John xiv. 2. "In my "father's houſe are many manſions; if it were not ſo, I "would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you;" and not only hath he left the promiſe of his return, but hath inſtituted this ordinance, on the one hand, to keep up the memory of his former appearance; and, on the other, to keep up our hopes of his ſecond coming, and what he will then beſtow, 1 Cor. xi. 23. "As often as ye eat this "bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death

" till he come." It is intended to ſupport the languiſhing faith of his people, and make them tread, with conſtancy, in his ſtrength, the ſame paths of virtue and ſelf-denial that he did, in hopes of ſhortly ſharing his crown and reward, Heb. xii. 1, 2. "——And let us run with patience " the race that is ſet before us; looking unto Jeſus, the " author and finiſher of our faith; who, for the joy that " was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the " ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne " of God." And how highly proper is this inſtitution for pointing us to the glorious iſſue of our Chriſtian conflict? In it, we have, at once, a proof of the certainty—of the excellence,—and even ſome perception of the nature of heavenly glory.

How certain and infallible is that happineſs to the ſaints, which our exalted Redeemer, *the Amen and faithful Witneſs*, hath paſſed his word for, and gone before, in our name, to take poſſeſſion of? Heb. vi. 19, 20. " Which " hope we have as an anchor of the ſoul, both ſure and " ſtedfaſt, and which entereth into that within the vail, " whither the forerunner is for us entered."—1 Cor. xv. 23. " But every man in his own order, Chriſt, the firſt " fruits, afterward they that are Chriſt's, at his coming." However high an hope it may ſeem for ſuch as we are, to aſpire to a ſtation ſo near the throne of God, to his preſence and fellowſhip; yet it is not too much, after what is already beſtowed upon us; after what Chriſt hath done, it can beget no ſurpriſe, that this ſhould be the concluſion of it; after he hath borne our ſins in his own body, and with his own blood waſhed away our guilt; after he hath ſanctified and cleanſed us by his holy Spirit, made us the children, and imprinted the image of his Father upon our hearts; after he hath kindled in our ſouls a flame of divine love, and made us content with nothing but himſelf, and with no place where he is not; ſurely he will not leave us comfortleſs; he can have no other deſign than to carry us to live with him, and reign with him for ever and ever.

Does not this repreſentation alſo ſerve to ſhow the excellency of the heavenly glory? It is called in ſcripture, " the purchaſed poſſeſſion." And, oh! my dear brethren,

how great, beyond expreſſion, muſt that inheritance be, which was ſo dearly bought, for which every price, but the blood of the eternal Son of God was rejected! See his body broken, and his blood ſhed; and there ſee what heaven has coſt; and this it coſt to him, who had dwelt there from eternity, and could not be deceived in its worth. It was no unneceſſary expence, idly thrown away, but what alone was equal to the glorious purchaſe. Had we nothing elſe, by which to gueſs at that, which eye hath not ſeen, this, of itſelf, ought to be ſufficient to raiſe our hopes, to the higheſt pitch, and give us the moſt exalted conceptions of its infinite glory.

And may I not add, upon this head, my brethren, that this ordinance is, to many, an earneſt and foretaſte, as well as an aſſurance, of the happineſs of heaven. Is it not the ſenſible communion with God, which ſome of his ſaints even here enjoy, a reſemblance, though faint, of that full and perfect communion which they ſhall enjoy with their Creator and Redeemer in the world above? John xiv. 23. "—If a man love me, he will keep my "words, and my Father will love him; and we will come "unto him, and make our abode with him." What is heaven, but to be free from ſin; to contemplate the glory of an infinite God; to be filled with a ſenſe of his love; and to be beyond the reach of temptation to offend him any more. Now, when the believer ſees his pardon ſealed with his Redeemer's blood; when he is filled with a hatred of all ſin, and a humble confidence of being delivered from its power; when his very complaints are put to ſilence, and the frailties of a dying body are left behind, or ſwallowed up by the hope of a bleſſed reſurrection; what is this, but the very dawn of heaven in the ſoul! what is this, but the ſhout of victory! and an earneſt of that day of complete triumph, when all his enemies ſhall be brought under his feet!

I am ſenſible that the frame of many communicants will be but a bad emblem of heaven; and, if they meaſure it by that ſtandard, it will give them but low and ſorry notions of it. This, however, is not the caſe with all; and there are few real Chriſtians, but in ſome parts of their

lives, have felt ſuch inward joy in God, that they have been ready to ſay, with the diſciples on the mount of tranſfiguration, *It is good for us to be here.* Neither is there any place where it may be more reaſonably expected than at a communion table: every pious ſoul ſhould breathe out this prayer of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "O "God! thou art my God! early will I ſeek thee: my "ſoul thirſteth for thee! my fleſh longeth for thee in a "dry and thirſty land, where no water is: to ſee thy pow- "er and thy glory, ſo as I have ſeen thee in the ſanctuary; "becauſe thy loving-kindneſs is better than life, my lips "ſhall praiſe thee. Thus will I bleſs thee, while I live! "I will lift up my hands in thy name!"

And now, my brethren, what reaſon is there for every ſincere communicant to go to God in this ordinance, *as their exceeding joy.* It points us forward to that bleſſed time when we ſhall indeed be ſatisfied with that fulneſs of joy, and thoſe rivers of pleaſures that are at his right hand. We are glad now, indeed, to help our flagging conceptions with ſymbols and figures: But then ſhall our eyes ſee the glorious Saviour ſtanding at the right hand of God, ſurrounded by ten thouſand of his ſaints, who have been redeemed by his blood. This life is but a ſcene of miſery and ſorrow, where wretchedneſs is often to be ſeen, and lamentations heard, even in the dwellings of the righteous; But then all tears ſhall be wiped away from their eyes, and theſe ſongs of praiſe begin which ſhall never end. Now we are borne down with prevailing corruption, which, as a dead weight, depreſſes our ſpirits: But then ſhall we be perfectly freed from all impurity, and ſerve our God and Redeemer with the ſame ſpirit and joy as the angels do in heaven. Now we are but as young unfledged birds, which in learning to fly can but flutter a little, and immediately take refuge in the earth: But we ſhall ſoon ſoar above it; riſing with unwearied wings and never failing ſtrength.

Let us forget for a little the weakneſs of mortality, and carry our thoughts to the general aſſembly of the church of the firſt born, where no ſuſpicion of our falſe heart being admitted ſhall remain, when all the wide congregation

ſhall join in celebrating the praiſes of Almighty God, and of the Lamb; and there ſhall not be one jarring or one diſcordant note in the univerſal harmony. Thus I have laid before you what a ſource of joy there is to the believer, in the holy ordinance which you now have acceſs to partake of, and proceed, in the

Laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject. And,

1. May I not, in a few words, obſerve how great is the goodneſs of God, in providing ſo rich an entertainment for us in our preſent ſtate. This life has been expreſsly deſigned, in Providence, as a ſcene of difficulties and trials. We are here in exile from our Father's houſe; yet doth he not leave us altogether deſolate, but hath given us this as a token and pledge of his love, before the full manifeſtation of it. Here is food to give us vigor for our journey, in this valley of tears: Strength to embolden us againſt our enemeis, that we may hold on our courſe ſteadily, without wearying. Will it be matter of eternal ſurpriſe, that the only begotten Son of God ſhould do honor to our world, by taking up his abode in it, and dignify human nature by wearing it himſelf, and uniting it to his own? Is it not a continued proof of the ſame condeſcenſion, as well as an evidence of divine wiſdom, that he ſhould leave to every age this ſtanding memorial of himſelf, his appearance and work, that ſenſe itſelf might be partner with faith, in rejoicing over his goodneſs? If his hearers were bleſſed with his heavenly voice, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, during his perſonal miniſtry, let us with admiration and joy, look upon the ſymbols of his ſufferings and death: let us ſurvey the picture of his agony drawn by himſelf, and let us remember what it promiſes, and what he is now gone to prepare for his faithful followers.

2. Let us, by way of improvement, conſider a little for whom this joy is provided; does not this need explication? And are not many of you ſaying within yourſelves, ſurely obſtinacy itſelf cannot deny, that here is great cauſe of joy to ſome: but who are they? is it not a joy with which a ſtranger cannot intermeddle, that per-

tains only to a privileged few? This inquiry is highly needful, as the great ſpring of joyleſs communions is the want of a perſonal application of the bleſſings of our Redeemer's purchaſe. That I may neither unwarrantably diſcourage any, nor proſtitute this precious privilege to the unworthy, I ſhall obſerve, that this joy is truly applicable to all to whom it is deſirable; to all whom it may be uſeful, but in different lights, according to their different characters.

1ſt, All thoſe who have not only laid hold on Chriſt for ſalvation, but have ſome degree of humble confidence in the divine mercy, on whom the Lord has lifted up the light of his reconciled countenance. If there are any ſuch among us, as God forbid but there were, they ought; but why do I ſay they ought; for, no doubt, they certainly will *go to God as their exceeding joy.* To you, my brethren, it belongs, with wonder and gratitude, to ſurvey theſe bleſſings to which you know your title, and to join in that heavenly anthem, Rev. i. 5, 6. "—Unto him "that loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own "blood, and hath made us kings and prieſts unto God, "and his father, to him be glory, and dominion for ever "and ever. Amen." Rev. vii. 12. "Bleſſing and glory, "and wiſdom, and thankſgiving, and honor and power, "and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." Let your faith follow your riſen Redeemer to his Father's throne, and look forward to what he is doing and preparing for you, as well as backward to what he hath already done. If Satan be under your feet; if ſin be crucified on your Saviour's croſs; and cares and ſorrows kept at a diſtance, I hope it will help you to ſome conception of the felicity of that ſtate, "where there ſhall be no more curſe, but the "throne of God, and of the Lamb ſhall be in it, and his "ſervants ſhall ſerve him."

2dly, In this ordinance there is matter of joy and conſolation to the fearful and doubting Chriſtian, who, not without deſires after God, and the remembrance of his name, yet is full of ſolicitude and anxiety, and dare not poſitively affirm his own intereſt in the Saviour. What is ſet before us in this ordinance, particularly what I have

this day opened up on the ſubject, will ſhow how well it is fitted for ſtrengthening the weak, and comforting the feeble-minded. But, to explain this propriety a little, let me aſk you is your doubt of God's willingneſs to receive returning ſinners? This doubt the Lord's ſupper is a full reſolution of; this table ſpread by his appointment, is an expreſs ſtipulation, on his part, of pardon and peace, to all who are willing to accept of them on the terms of the goſpel? Well, but what are the terms of the goſpel? Infinitely free and gracious, on the one hand, and exceeding ſtrict and ſevere on the other; full forgiveneſs to the chief of ſinners, without any merit or qualification on their part; complete deliverance from the power of corruption; and ſanctification by the Holy Spirit of grace. What then are the ſevere terms? Truly to accept of them juſt as fully and freely as they are offered; to receive forgiveneſs as mere mercy, which we have not deſerved, and deſire deliverance from every ſin without exception; and to expect to obtain it not from ourſelves, but by the ſtrength that is in Chriſt: the true ſelf-denial of the goſpel is the hardeſt ſacrifice to human pride. Men may cry up morality, and boaſt of it, and truſt in it, and never practiſe it; but heartily to approve of the whole law of God, and breathe after conformity to it, as the purchaſe of Chriſt's death, and the effect of our union with him, and giving the honor of it only to him, this, if I miſtake not, is the obedience of faith. Now, do you doubt whether you have accepted Chriſt on theſe terms? This is not doubting, but refuſing; and I have no conſolation for you. But if you are willing that Chriſt ſhould be all, and you ſhould be nothing, and ſincerely grieve for the ſin and impurity that ſtill cleaves to you, and even for your unbelief, and the hardneſs of your hearts, come to this table, and "my "God ſhall ſupply all your wants from his riches in glory "by Chriſt Jeſus."

3dly, That I may, if poſſible, yet farther illuſtrate and commend the divine grace, here is matter of joy to all without exception: "Behold, I bring you glad tidings "of great joy, that God is in Chriſt reconciling the world "unto himſelf!" You have cauſe to be thankful, that,

for your former contempt of mercy, you have not been cut off from the land of the living, and condemned for ever to the flames. O that you were ſenſible what grace and patience is exerciſed towards you in your daily preſervation! that your paſt refuſals have not been accepted as your final choice, and your ſtate determined beyond redemption! I do, now, upon this ſolemn occaſion, when the body and blood of Chriſt, as broken and ſhed for ſinners, is to be ſet before you, by his warrant and authority, beſeech you, by the mercies of God, and pray you to be reconciled unto him. Shall I be obliged, on this ſeaſon of joy, amidſt ſo bright a diſplay of divine love, to unſheath the ſword of almighty vengeance, and denounce the terrors of the Lord? No, my brethren, I rather chuſe, now, to beſeech than to command, to invite than to threaten you; to ſhew you the wrath of God falling upon your Saviour than upon yourſelves; and ſhall not his love conſtrain you, ſhall not his mercy perſuade you, not to reject the counſel of God againſt yourſelves? Will you prefer the pleaſures of ſin, carnal mirth, and ſenſual riot, to all the bleſſed fruits of divine love? You will ſay, I ſuſpect, that you have but a cold notion of all this profuſion of language about joy in God; it is becauſe you know it not. Do but taſte and ſee, that the Lord is good! I am ſenſible, however, it is in vain to ſpeak to any but thoſe who are weary of their ſins; and therefore I ſhall only, in our Saviour's words, call all thoſe "who are weary and heavy "laden to come unto him, that they may have reſt." As this ordinance is proper for ratifying former engagements, ſo it is alſo proper for entering into covenant with God, and ſolemnly giving yourſelves to be his. And oh that this may be a day and place, marked in the regiſters of heaven, when and where many joined themſelves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten or recalled!

3. The laſt uſe to be made of this ſubject, is to ſhow you what is your proper employment at the Lord's table. It ought to be a joyful, thankful application of the bleſſings of Chriſt's purchaſe to your ſouls. Be ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God; not only celebrate his love, but improve it, by aſking, in faith, every thing neceſſary to

your sanctification and peace.—I shall shut up all, by desiring you to use the Psalmist's preface, in going unto God, who says, in the 3d verse, "O send out thy light "and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me in- "to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." In order to raise and elevate your minds, to fix and engage your unsettled hearts, apply to God, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, that he would dispose you for his service; that he would shed abroad his love in your hearts, and make you joyful in his house of prayer. And my earnest prayer to God for you, is, that he would at this time, convert some, or (why should we limit him?) every profane sinner in this assembly; pull off the mask of hypocrites, and shew them their own likeness; that he would make it a joyful communion to many of you, and a profitable communion to all. Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DISPOSITION UNDER A SENSE OF MERCIES RECEIVED.

SERMON 21.

PSALM cxvi. 7.

Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

IT is the language of nature, as well as of grace, to cry to God in diſtreſs. When great extremity ſhows the weakneſs of all other help, there remains ſo much of God written on the conſciences even of the moſt profligate, as excites them to this duty. The truth of this obſervation appears from many ſcripture examples, as well as every day's experience. But though bad men may cry to God for deliverance from ſuffering, they know little, if any thing at all, of returning to God in duty and gratitude, for the mercy received, Pſal. lxxviii. 34,—37. "When he "ſlew them, then they ſought him; and they returned, "and inquired early after God. And they remembered "that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeem-"er. Nevertheleſs, they did flatter him with their mouth, "and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their "heart was not right with him; neither were they ſtedfaſt "in his covenant." See alſo the account of the ten lepers, Luke xvii. 12,—17. "And as he entered into a certain "village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which "ſtood afar off, and they lifted up their voices, and ſaid,

" Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And, when he saw " them, he said unto them, go shew yourselves unto the " priests; and it came to pass, that, as they went, they " were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he " was healed, turned back, and, with a loud voice, glori- " fied God, and fell down on his face, at his feet, giving " him thanks; and he was a Samaritan: and Jesus an- " swering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where " are the nine?" They all cried alike for the cure; but the greatest part soon forgot their obligation to their merciful Saviour.

It is no way difficult to account for this behavior in bad men; but, alas! it is melancholy to think how much of this unhappy disposition is to be found even in the best. When the pressure of any trial is felt, they flee to God as their refuge and security; with fervent supplication, and earnest wrestling, they intreat his help. But, though we must not charge any sincere servant of God with an entire forgetfulness of his goodness, or open desertion of his service; yet, I am afraid, that many are very defective in this particular; and that few, very few, preserve the same solicitude to improve their mercies, as to obtain them.

My intention is to apply this to us, who have lately been at the Lord's table; and, I hope, before going there, not a few were earnest in their prayers for the divine presence. Urged by the sufferings of this mortal body, the loss of outward comforts, the power of inward temptations, or a desire of the return of an absent God, or the quickening of a slothful spirit, they sought consolation in this holy ordinance; they went to seek the Lord, going and weeping. I hope also, and believe, that many went not in vain, but "found him whom their soul loved, found " him, and would not let him go." All such ought to imitate the Psalmist in the spirit that breathes through the whole of this Psalm; and, particularly, in the words of my text: *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

I need only say, in a very few words, that the whole Psalm is an expression of his gratitude for deliverance from great sufferings, from enemies cruel and treacherous.

They were alſo of an inward, as well as an outward kind, as all his trials did ordinarily bring ſin to remembrance, and fill him with a humbling ſenſe of the awful judgments of a holy and righteous God. He ſeems alſo to have been particularly exerciſed in prayer to God his all-ſufficient help: ver. 3, 4. "The ſorrows of death compaſſed me, "and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble "and ſorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; "O Lord, I beſeech thee, deliver my ſoul." He thereupon celebrates the mercy of God, and wearing the bonds of love, deſires to expreſs his obligations in the ſtrongeſt terms, and to ſatisfy them by the moſt chearful obedience: verſe 12. "What ſhall I render unto the Lord for all his "benefits towards me?"

In diſcourſing further, at this time, I ſhall juſt obſerve, that the words of the text contain the Pſalmiſt's reſolution: *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul.*—And the reaſon on which it is founded;——*for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* Theſe two, as applicable to the ſervants of God in general, and ourſelves in particular, I ſhall diſtinctly conſider, not in the order of the words, but in the order of nature.

I. I ſhall deſcribe the ſtate of thoſe with whom God *hath dealt bountifully.*

II. Explain the import of the Pſalmiſt's reſolution, which ought to be theirs: *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul.*

And then ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject.

I. Then, I ſhall deſcribe the ſtate of thoſe with whom God *hath dealt bountifully;* and I am juſt to deſcribe this, in its great lines, from experience, beſeeching every one preſent to hear it with application; and to add ſuch circumſtances to the ſeveral particulars, as will make them completely ſuitable to his own ſtate—Obſerve, then,

1. That the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thoſe from whom he hath removed any affliction under which they groaned, and for deliverance from which they prayed.—If we would count our mercies, they are very many: and

we often loſe both the reliſh of them, and the benefit of them, by not obſerving them. Thoſe who are delivered from ſickneſs, or the fear of it, in themſelves, or their relations, ought to be ſenſible of the goodneſs of God, who maketh them to lye down and riſe up in ſafety.—If any had reaſon to fear confinement from ordinances, or from uſefulneſs, they ſhould ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. cxviii. 16,——19. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the "right hand of the Lord doth valiantly. I ſhall not die, "but live, and declare the works of the Lord; the Lord "hath chaſtened me ſore; but he hath not given me over "unto death. Open to me the gates of righteouſneſs; I "will go into them, and I will praiſe the Lord."—If any were oppreſſed with calumny and reproach, and God hath hidden them from the ſtriſe of tongues, hath pleaded their cauſe, or brought forth their "judgment as the light, and "their righteouſneſs as the noon-day," The Pſalmiſt ſays, Pſal. cxviii. 10,—14, "All nations compaſſed me "about; but in the name of the Lord will I deſtroy them. "They compaſſed me about, yea, they compaſſed me "about; but, in the name of the Lord, I will deſtroy them. "They compaſſed me about like bees; they are quenched "as the fire of thorns; for, in the name of the Lord, I "will deſtroy them. Thou haſt thruſt ſore at me, that I "might fall; but the Lord helped me: the Lord is my "ſtrength and ſong, and is become my ſalvation." If any are delivered from the fear of want, and a reaſonable proſpect given them of competent and ſuitable proviſion for themſelves and families; if they can remember the time, whether lately or at a greater diſtance, when they ſeemed to be threatened with poverty and dependance, and all the ſhame, diſtreſs, and temptation that attends that enſnaring ſtate; if, I ſay, they can remember this, and ſee how God, by a gracious providence, has led them by the hand; has given them food to eat and raiment to put on, and even honored them with the ability and the heart to ſtretch out their hands to the poor and needy, the fatherleſs and the widow; ſurely he hath dealt bountifully with them. They ought to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxiii. 5, "Thou prepareſt a table before me in the preſence of

" mine enemies : thou anointeſt my head with oil, my " cup runneth over."—If any have been burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, the arrows of the Lord within them, and the poiſon thereof drinking up their ſouls, and God hath revealed himſelf to them, as pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin ; if they have been enabled to lay hold, with clearneſs and confidence, of the great atonement, they have ſurely taſted of his love : Or, if a ſpirit of bondage and ſlaviſh fear has given a forbidding aſpect to the paths of piety, or hath brought a gloom and darkneſs upon the paths of providence, and it hath pleaſed God to ſpeak peace to their ſouls, by the Spirit of conſolation, they will ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſalm ciii. 1, " Bleſs the Lord, O " my ſoul, and all that is within me, bleſs his holy name." —Or, finally, if any hath complained of a dead, ſlothful, ſecure frame, reſting too eaſily in the form, and minding little of the power of godlineſs, and it hath pleaſed God to touch their hearts and lips with a live-coal from off his altar; to command their attention by his word; to excite their affections in his worſhip, and to give a new ſtrain of Watchfulneſs and tenderneſs to the whole of their converſation: they have ſurely the greateſt reaſon to ſay, " Re- " turn unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt " bountifully with thee."

2. The Lord hath dealt bountifully with you, if you can obſerve a particular mark and ſignature of his providence in your mercies. It is one thing to receive the bounty of providence, and another to diſcern and confeſs the hand that beſtows it. Even with regard to the bleſſings that are, in a great meaſure, common to every thing that lives, it is a matter of the higheſt moment, and of great influence in religion, to have a deep and ſerious conviction from whom they flow, to be ſenſible of the abſolute and conſtant dependance of every creature upon God. It places us immediately in our Maker's preſence ; for, as the apoſtle Paul ſays, Acts xvii. 27, "—He is not far " from every one of us. For in him we live, and move, " and have our being."

But though this is not to be neglected, I have ſomething farther in view, viz. When we can obſerve the particular

ſteps of providence, as well as the gracious intention of it, as the fruit of ſpecial and diſtinguiſhing love. The foot-ſteps of Providence are to be ſeen often in the means,—in the ſeaſon,—and in the nature of the mercy.

1ſt. When the means by which any mercy is brought about are extraordinary, and far beyond the reach of human wiſdom, it ſerves to ſhow that God himſelf hath been their help. Sometimes the children of God are left to prove the weakneſs of all created help, and to be urged in a manner to the brink of deſpair, that their deliverance may be the more ſignal, and may the more evidently point out the very finger of God. What a mercy is it, when the enemies of good men wait for their halting, and hope to overcome them, and yet they are remarkably delivered, and out of weakneſs are made ſtrong? See how the Pſalmiſt prays, Pſal. lxxxvi. 16, 17. "O turn unto "me, and have mercy upon me. Give thy ſtrength unto "thy ſervant, and ſave the ſon of thine handmaid. Shew "me a token for good, that they which hate me may ſee "it, and be aſhamed; becauſe thou, Lord, haſt holpen "me, and comforted me."

2dly. Sometimes the providence of God is ſeen in the ſeaſon of the mercy. It is beſtowed when it is moſt needed, or when it may be of greateſt uſe. When the faith of his people is beginning to fail, it frequently meets with unexpected and eminent ſupport, Pſ. lxxiii. 2. "But as "for me, my feet were almoſt gone: my ſteps had well "nigh ſlipt." v. 10. "Therefore his people return hi-"ther: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them." Pſalm xciv. 16, 17, 18, 19. "Who will riſe up for me "againſt the evil doers? or who will ſtand up for me "againſt the workers of iniquity? Unleſs the Lord had "been my help, my ſoul had almoſt dwelt in ſilence. "When I ſaid, my foot ſlippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, "held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within "me, thy comforts delight my ſoul." When they have duties of importance before them, they have ſometimes ſuch ſupplies of grace and ſtrength given them, as to carry them through with comfort and with credit. Sometimes, to prepare them for trials which may be before them, they

have uncommon measures of consolation from above; and sometimes under or after trials, for their support and comfort, they meet with all in the Creator, and much more than they lost in the creature. And I hope, my brethren, many have cause to adore the wisdom, as well as the grace of God in public ordinances, that directs his ministers, as well as his Spirit, to such instructions as may be most suitable, both to the wants and the desires of his saints. How excellent is sound instruction, at any rate! But what a new beauty and excellency does is acquire, in the eyes of that person, to whose inward complaints it is directly suited? We may say of it as Solomon says, Proverbs xv. 23, "A man hath joy by the answer of his "mouth; and a word spoken in due season, how good is "it?"——xxv. 11. "A word fitly spoken is like apples "of gold in pictures of silver." Isaiah l. 4. "The Lord "God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I "should know how to speak a word in season to him that "is weary."

3dly. Once more: The signature of Providence is sometimes seen in the nature of the mercy, when it is exactly suited to the state and character of the person concerned. Our temper, station, duties, have in them a very great diversity; and there is frequently an opportunity to observe how God dispenses his gifts with wisdom and propriety. If he gives to the rich, humility, thankfulness, or liberality; to the poor, patience, trust, and resignation: If he keeps the weak from temptation and trial; and fills with fortitude those who are to meet with resistance; and, in general, accommodates his mercies to their apparent necessity, can it be denied, that he deals bountifully with them. We are taught this truth in a very tender passage, Psal. ciii. 13, 14. "Like as a father pitieth his children, "so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth "our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." In many instances, indeed, this kindness and condescension is to be observed both in the nature of mercies, and in the measure of afflictions, Isa. xxvii. 8. "In measure, when "it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth

" his rough wind in the day of the eaſt wind." This leads me to obſerve,

3. That the Lord deals bountifully with his people, when he gives them a clear and ſatisfying view of the ſalutary end, and enables them to make a ſanctified uſe both of their trials and mercies. I need not tell you, that calamities of various kinds are inſeparable from this ſtate of mortality and of ſin; neither need I tell you that the children of God never were, nor ever ſhall be exempted from their ſhare. But, as their mercies have a quite different nature and influence, from thoſe which are beſtowed upon a careleſs, ſecure world; ſo their trials have a peculiar direction, and are capable of a ſpiritual improvement: nay, they are repreſented in ſcripture, as the fruit and evidence of love, Heb. xii. 5. " And ye have forgot-" ten the exhortation which ſpeaketh unto you as unto " children, My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the " Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Pſalm lxxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33. " If his children forſake my law, " and walk not in my judgments; if they break my ſta-" tutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I " viſit their tranſgreſſion with the rod, and their iniquity " with ſtripes: nevertheleſs, my loving-kindneſs will I " not utterly take from him, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to " fail."

Now, my brethren, ſometimes the children of God may ſtruggle for a ſeaſon under afflictions, and find much difficulty to adhere ſtedfaſtly to their duty: nay, what do I ſay? truly they may ſin not a little by impatience in their hearts, and ſpeaking unadviſedly with their lips, as well as by ſinking under the ſtroke, and manifeſting unbelief and diſtruſt in the rock of their ſalvation. They may be alſo greatly at a loſs to interpret the language of Providence, and diſcover the cauſe of God's controverſy with them. They may ſay, with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxvii. 6, —9, " I call to remembrance my ſong in the night; I " commune with mine own heart, and my ſpirit made di-" ligent ſearch. Will the Lord caſt off forever? and will " he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for-" ever? Doth his promiſe fail for evermore? Hath God

" forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger ſhut up his " tender mercies? Selah." Or, with Job, Job x. 1,—3, " My ſoul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint " upon myſelf; I will ſpeak in the bitterneſs of my ſoul. " I will ſay unto God, do not condemn me; ſhew me " wherefore thou contendeſt with me. Is it good unto " thee, that thou ſhouldeſt oppreſs? that thou ſhouldeſt " deſpiſe the work of thine hands, and ſhine upon the " counſel of the wicked?"

But what a mercy is it, when it pleaſeth God to reconcile our minds to the will of his providence; to ſet home upon the conſcience his right of ſovereignty; his title to diſpoſe of our perſons, our reputation, our ſubſtance, our relations, without exception, and without condition, even as he will. O how happy! to be able to ſay, with our ſuffering Saviour, " O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this " cup paſs from me! nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as " thou wilt. And, again, if this cup may not paſs away " from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Is this unreaſonable? Nothing leſs. Should he not do what he will with his own? Is it impoſſible? Bleſſed be God, it is far from it. How happy, my brethren, to have our corruptions mortified by ſuffering! to have the ſpirit broken by contrition and penitence, when the body is broken by ſickneſs or diſtreſs; to weaken our attachment to the world, when it is ſhowing its inſtability and uncertainty as our poſſeſſion; to hate the ſin for which, and not the God by whom the ſtroke is inflicted, let it be of what nature ſoever it will? O how happy to have divine conſolation under ſuffering! an angel from heaven ſtrengthening us! the ſoul following hard after God! when the believer is enabled to delight himſelf in God, even in the abſence of all outward comfort! and to ſay with Hab. iii. 17, 18, " Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither " ſhall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive ſhall " fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat; the flock ſhall " be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the " ſtalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the " God of my ſalvation!" O how happy is it, when we experience the ſanctifying effects of ſuffering, to be able to

look back upon it, and find the bitterneſs and ſeverity over, or mitigated by time, but the fruits of it remaining, and daily gathering ſtrength! One affliction, truly ſanctified, prepares the mind for others to follow, and makes them both more tolerable, and more uſeful. He who has ſought, and found conſolation in God, under one affliction, is refreſhed, braced, and armed for another combat; he is not ſo much afraid of new and unknown enemies, becauſe he knows where to find ſure and effectual ſupport. There is ſomething very noble and animated in that part of the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to the elders of Epheſus, which relates to his ſufferings for the goſpel, Acts xx. 22, 23, 24. "And now, behold, I go bound in the ſpirit unto Jeruſa-"lem, not knowing the things that ſhall befal me there: "ſave that the Holy Ghoſt witneſſeth in every city, ſay-"ing, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of "theſe things move me; neither count I my life dear "unto myſelf, ſo that I might finiſh my courſe with joy, "and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Je-"ſus, to teſtify the goſpel of the grace of God." I cannot go through either every kind of ſuffering, or every kind of benefit we may receive from it; but we have the pleaſure of ſeeing the ſcripture ſaints, both in the Old and New Teſtament, bearing witneſs to the ſalutary conſequence of affliction. Thus David ſays, Pſal. cxix. 67, "Before I "was afflicted, I went aſtray; but now have I kept thy "word:" and verſe 71, "It is good for me that I have "been afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes." And the apoſtle Paul, Rom. v. 3. "And not only ſo, but we "glory in tribulation alſo, knowing that tribulation work-"eth patience." And ſo certain is this truth, that, I am perſuaded, there is no ſerious exerciſed perſon among us, but is willing to ſtrengthen the evidence by his own teſtimony.

I may add, that the Lord deals very bountifully with thoſe to whom he gives the ſanctified uſe of their mercies; when in general mercies have not led to ſecurity or pride, but to thankfulneſs, and even to a holy concern to improve them to the glory of God; when great abundance of outward poſſeſſions has not led to ſenſuality, or profa-

nity, or hardneſs of heart; but, on the contrary, to humility, uſefulneſs, liberality; when a numerous or growing family, children ſpringing up as olive plants round about the table, only fill the parents with a tender concern to train them up in the fear of God, and ſeaſon their young hearts with early impreſſions of religion; when, inſtead of a fooliſh jealouſy or ambition to have your children more ſumptuouſly dreſſed than others, your great care is to have them kept from the ſociety of the vicious, and to have them no way behind the very beſt accompliſhed in every branch of uſeful knowledge; when you are favored with the eſteem and affection of others, and God enables you to improve your influence by zeal and diligence in doing good.

Theſe are all ſanctified mercies; and, as the Lord deals bountifully with thoſe on whom they are beſtowed from time to time; ſo, in acts of ſolemn worſhip, it is an unſpeakable happineſs, when ſuch views are taken of our ſtate and ſituation, and of the aſpect of providence towards us, as ſerve to confirm and ſtrengthen every holy diſpoſition, and lead us in the paths of truth and righteouſneſs. In the

4th, And laſt place, The *Lord hath dealt bountifully* with thoſe whom he hath admitted to the moſt intimate and ſpiritual communion with himſelf; thoſe whom he hath carried above the ſphere of temptation, filled them with ſenſible joy in the Holy Ghoſt here, and earneſt deſires after the complete and perpetual enjoyment of his preſence in heaven. My brethren, it is no contemptible communion with God, when the ſoul is poured out in penitential ſorrow, filled with hatred of ſin, with a love of God's laws, or ſubmiſſion to his providence; when the Spirit ſhines with clearneſs either on commands or promiſes, and makes the heart approve and reſt in them; but there are alſo ſpecial happy ſeaſons, when the believer may be ſaid to leave his mercies, trials, ſins, and duties, altogether at a diſtance, and to rejoice in the contemplation of an infinite God. He is the proper object of the higheſt eſteem, and moſt ardent love of every reaſonable creature; he is the immediate object of delight and wonder to the celeſtial hoſts; and ſometimes he vouchſafes ſome degree

of the like exalted joy even to the saints on earth. It seems to have been the desire of Moses, when he says, Exod. xxxiii. 18, "—I beseech thee shew me thy glory." And the same seems to have been the happy attainment of the disciples on the mount of transfiguration; of which see the account, Matth. xvii. 1,—4, "And after six days, "Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and "bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was "transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the "sun, and his raiment was white as the light; and, be- "hold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking "with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us "make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for "Moses, and one for Elias." The lustre of their Master's appearance, and what they heard of his intercourse with the two inhabitants of heaven, seems to have made them quite forget that they had any thing to do on earth: or, at least, made them very unwilling to return to their former state.

How shall I explain this, or bring it down to the conception of worldly men? Perhaps it is wrong to attempt it; but, lest any should go away, speaking with contempt or indignation of communion with God, as extravagance, enthusiasm, and folly, I shall take leave to support it by the following illustration. Suppose any of you were, as perhaps you have been, admitted to the sight of some exceeding strange and wonderful appearance in nature or art; will not this sometimes fill you with inexpressible surprise and delight? will it not, for a time, quite suspend your attention to any thing else? Your business, cares, fears, and other pleasures, will be all forgotten for a season. Now, if this is the case, I desire to know, why the glory of the true God, discovered in his word, and illustrated by his Spirit, may not, or ought not to be the subject of the greatest wonder, and most exalted pleasure, to those who truly love him? The truth is, there is so much to be seen, that is surprising and astonishing, both in the nature and works of God, in creation, providence, and redemption, that the only thing that hinders us from dwelling

with delight on this great subject, is the sinfulness of our nature, which too strongly prompts us to flee from him. When therefore the believer is freed from the apprehensions of guilt, and goes to God, as his God, in gratitude and duty, it is no wonder that he tastes a little of that unspeakable joy that is at his right hand. I doubt not, but many will say this is true. O let but the light of his reconciled countenance shine upon me, let me be but free from the doubt, suspicion, and fear, suggested by my sins, and heaven would immediately begin to dawn upon my soul!

As intimate communion with God may be said to bring down something of heaven to earth, so it always carries the desires of the soul from earth to heaven. It is not only made up of faith and contemplation in the present state, but of hope, which breathes after further discoveries in a state of greater perfection. It not only increases desire, but helps our conceptions. The soul, if I may speak so, climbs up to the summit of present enjoyments, that it may see the farther into what still remains. It says, as it were, if such the glory and lustre of the outer court, what must be the unvailed splendor of the holy of holies. You see the apostle Paul makes this use of comparative reflections, 1 Cor. xiii. 9,—12, "For we know in part; and "we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is "come, then that which is in part shall be done away. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as "a child, I thought as a child; but, when I became a "man, I put away childish things: for now we see through "a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in "part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 John iii. 2.—"And it doth not yet appear what we shall "be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall "be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Alas! my brethren, that intimate communion with God should be so rare, and that so few of us should attain to the disposition of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who desired "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Let us be ashamed of it. Surely many of us have tasted a good deal, and seen a good deal more of the vanity of

the world, which ought to wean our affections from it. Happy, happy they! who can uſe the language of the apoſtle to the Philippians, Phil. iii. 20, 21. "For our "converſation is in heaven, from whence alſo we look for "the Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who ſhall change "our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his "glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is "able even to ſubdue all things unto himſelf." And, Titus ii. 13. "Looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glo-"rious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Je-"ſus Chriſt." That there are ſome who have been formerly, and of late, ſo happily viſited with the divine preſence, I have little doubt; and to as many as have been ſo, ſurely I am warranted to ſay, *the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you.*

II. I come now to the ſecond thing propoſed, viz. to explain the import of the Pſalmiſt's reſolution, or his exhortation to his own ſoul, which all in the ſame ſituation ought to imitate, *Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul.* It may, perhaps, be ſuppoſed only to imply, that he reſolves to forget his anxiety and care, and ſolace himſelf in that ſtate of quiet and ſecurity to which he was happily brought by the kindneſs of Providence; but though, no doubt, this may be conſidered as, in part, the meaning of the words, I cannot think it is the whole. It would be doing great injury to the holy Pſalmiſt, to ſuppoſe that he was not carried upward, in his views, to the Author of his reſt, or to God himſelf, as the reſt of his ſoul. The whole Pſalm, indeed, breathes his piety and gratitude to God; and his deſire of teſtifying it by every proper and acceptable expreſſion. Taking the words, therefore, in this light, we may ſuppoſe them to imply the following particulars:

1. Return, and give the praiſe where it is due; and humbly acknowledge God as the author of thy mercies. He had, as we ſee by the preceding verſes, earneſtly implored help from God in his diſtreſs; and now deſires to confeſs that it came from no other quarter. We are exceeding ready to fail in this particular; ſometimes we

look upon the outward means and visible instruments of our deliverance, and forget the Supreme Disposer of all events, who employs them, directs them, and blesses them. Sometimes we embrace the mercy itself with so much complacency, that we forget both our former necessity, and the author of our deliverance. In opposition to both these, it is our indispensable duty, to ascribe every mercy we receive, and every deliverance with which we are favored, to God, as its proper author, and to offer him the tribute of praise, and to bless his name for ever. James i. 17. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is "from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." I admire the manner of speaking frequently found in scripture, where the kindness of men towards us is immediately and expressly attributed to the agency of God, Gen. xxxix. 21. "But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed "him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper "of the prison." Acts vii. 9, 10. "And the patriarchs, "moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was "with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, "and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, "King of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, "and all his house." Dan. i. 9. "Now God had brought "Daniel into favor and tender love with the Prince of "the eunuchs."

How great a duty, and how important a part of religion, praise and thanksgiving to God are, may be seen in every page of the holy scripture, both in the way of precept and example, Deut. viii. 10. "When thou hast eat-"en, and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God, "for the good land which he hath given thee." Psalm cxxxvi. 1, 2, 3. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he "is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. O give "thanks unto the God of gods; for his mercy endureth "for ever. O give thanks to the Lord of lords; for his "mercy endureth for ever." Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3. "Bless "the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless "his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and for-"get not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniqui-"ties; who healeth all thy diseases." Psalm cxlv. 1, 2.

" I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bleſs " thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bleſs " thee; and I will praiſe thy name for ever and ever." And that this duty ought particularly to be diſcharged by thoſe who have been highly favored of God in any reſpect, is very plain. Though the glory of God is the ſubject of habitual adoration, and the conſtant courſe of his bounty, the ſubject of habitual gratitude, yet new and ſpecial mercies, give, as it were, a new ſpring, and add ſtrength and vigor to the ſoul in this exerciſe. Our praiſes ought to be particular, as well as general; and thoſe who obſerve and record the ſpecial inſtances of divine mercy toward them, will find a fulneſs of heart in this duty, to which they are perfect ſtrangers, who ſatisfy themſelves with a general and indiſcriminate acknowledgment of the divine bounty. Many of the Pſalms of David are monuments of his gratitude, for particular interpoſitions of Providence in his behalf, and bear particular marks of reference to the time and circumſtances of his diſtreſs.

I only add, upon this ſubject, that the Pſalmiſt might well ſay, in this ſenſe, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul;* for a tender and affectionate acknowledgment of the mercies of God, not only makes us find our reſt in him, but makes his mercies reſt with us; it increaſes the ſweetneſs of every comfort;—it purifies its nature;—it prolongs its duration.—It increaſes the ſweetneſs of it: for this I appeal to the experience of every child of God. Do you ever taſte ſo much real delight in any mercy, as when you pour out your heart to God in gratitude for beſtowing it; even in gifts from men we are ſometimes ſenſible of a higher value in them, on account of the perſon who gave them, than any worth they have in themſelves. This holds, in the ſtrongeſt manner, with regard to God; the more we return our mercies in praiſe to the giver, the more we poſſeſs them, and the greater richneſs we diſcover in them.—It alſo purifies their nature. Many inſtances of divine goodneſs regard our ſtate and circumſtances in the preſent life; they are the objects of ſenſible gratification, as well as religious gratitude. Now, when we obſerve and celebrate the kindneſs of him that beſtows

them, they not only ſtrengthen the body, but ſanctify the ſoul. Is it not ſomething more than barely outward proviſion, when we ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſalm xxiii. 5, "Thou prepareſt a table before me, in the preſence of "mine enemies; thou anointeſt my head with oil; my "cup runneth over?"—Again, it prolongs the duration of our mercies. One of the conſequences of the weakneſs and imperfection of the preſent ſtate, is, that we are ready ſoon to forget our mercies, and to loſe the reliſh of them. In how many inſtances do we find, that what gave us great and ſenſible pleaſure at firſt, becomes, in time, habitual, and, at laſt, indifferent to us? Now, praiſing, and confeſſing the goodneſs of God in them, ſerves to write them upon our hearts; to continue the ſweetneſs of common mercies; and keep up the memory of ſignal mercies, or thoſe of an extraordinary kind. Health, ſtrength, proviſion, and comfort, when they are not interrupted, are apt to be quite overlooked; but the daily acknowledgment of divine goodneſs, gives us not only the poſſeſſion, but the uſe of them. Signal mercies, in time, ſlip out of the memory, but the more we have acknowledged them, they will be the more eaſily recalled to remembrance. I have known inſtances of pious perſons appointing fixed days of thankſgiving for extraordinary deliverances, which ſerved to renew their ſenſe of them, and gave them ſome degree, at leaſt, of the ſame joy and gratitude which they felt when the event happened. Some alſo, by keeping a record in writing of the paths of divine providence toward them, are able to read them over at proper times in their order, to compare them together, and thus, as it were, to have a rich feaſt upon a whole life of mercies, the remembrance of many of which would otherwiſe have been effaced by time.

2. This expreſſion may imply returning to God, and delighting in him as our reconciled God, and ſupreme portion and happineſs. This is indeed the reſt of the gracious ſoul, which gives him more joy than all outward poſſeſſions taken together. His outward poſſeſſions have no value, but as they flow from it, and lead back to it. He ſays with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. iv. 6, 7, 8, "There be

" many that ſay, Who will ſhow us any good? Lord,
" lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou
" haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time
" that their corn and their wine increaſed. I will both
" lay me down in peace and ſleep: for thou Lord only
" makeſt me dwell in ſafety. Pſal. lxxiii. 23, 25. Never-
" theleſs I am continually with thee: thou haſt holden me
" by my right hand. Thou ſhalt guide me with thy coun-
" ſel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I
" in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that
" I deſire beſides thee." Now, my brethren, this reſt is frequently diſturbed, and meets with interruption in the preſent life. Sin is the chief cauſe of interruption; it raiſes an interpoſing cloud, and ſeparates between God and us. But it is alſo ſometimes interrupted by affliction, and diſtreſſes of various kinds. Theſe two cauſes have a mutual relation, and a mutual influence one upon another. Afflictions bring ſin to remembrance, and ſin ſqueezes the bittereſt ingredients into the cup of affliction; ſo that it ſometimes becomes a cup of trembling. The believer is often ready to miſtake the rod of fatherly correction for the exterminating ſtroke of avenging juſtice: hence the bitter and heart melting complaints of many of the children of God. Job vi. 4. " For the arrows of the Almighty are
" within me, the poiſon whereof drinketh up my ſpirit,
" the terrors of God do ſet themſelves in array againſt me."
Pſal. xlii. 6, 7. " O my God, my ſoul is caſt down with-
" in me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of
" Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.
" Deep calleth unto deep at the noiſe of thy water-ſpouts:
" all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." Lam.
iii. 1,—4. " I am the man that hath ſeen affliction by the
" rod of his wrath. He hath led me and brought me in-
" to darkneſs, but not into light. Surely againſt me is he
" turned, he turneth his hand againſt me all the day. My
" fleſh and my ſkin hath he made old, he hath broken my
" bones."

While this continues, the believer is excluded from his reſt; and indeed the more peace he can take in any thing, while at a diſtance from God, ſo much the worſe ſign it

is of his character; so much the more fearful symptom of his state. But when the Lord hath loosened his bonds, lifted up his countenance upon him, and given him peace, is it not proper and natural for him to say, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* When he hath seen the marks of distinguishing love in his mercies; when he hath tasted consolation under suffering, or communion with God, in public or in secret, will not this dispose him to rest in God, to improve the happy season, and desire its continuance? All things else are vain, and have proved their vanity, but complete satisfaction is here.

I have no doubt, my brethren, that this is, if not the only, yet one of the chief senses, in which we ought to understand these words. Rest, you know, supposes labor, and even weariness before. Rest also seems to imply that which is the end of labor, or the desire of the weary. It also signifies that which is to continue, or that we wish to continue without further change. In this sense it is used, Psal. cxxxii. 8, and 14, "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, "thou and the ark of thy strength. This is my rest for "ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it:" which refers to the ark of the testimony taking a fixed abode, and being no more carried about from place to place. The same sense is conveyed to us by Heb. iv. 9, "There re-"maineth therefore a rest to the people of God." When, therefore, the Psalmist says, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul,* it means that God, and his favor, was his supreme and ultimate desire, the very centre of his hope. Is it not so with every real servant of God? All true religion points to, and ends in this. All religion, without this, is an empty form. And when we return to this, after any interruption, is it not like the distressed mariner, after having been driven about in a tempestuous ocean, and threatened every moment with destruction by the rising billows, at last obtaining sight, and entering with heart-felt joy into a haven of security and peace?

3. In the last place, this expression implies a confidence and reliance on God for protection and security against future dangers. This seems necessary to the complete-

neſs and perfection of any deliverance. The danger may be warded off for a ſeaſon; if there is ground to fear its immediate or ſpeedy return, the ſtate is very precarious, and the comfort very imperfect; but thoſe who are delivered from fear of evil, and think they can depend upon their defence and guard, have received a deliverance indeed.

Now, this is the view which a believer is particularly led to take of God, as his ſure and all-ſufficient help. He conſiders the greatneſs of his power, the operation of his providence, and the faithfulneſs of his promiſe. How often does the Pſalmiſt expreſs, in the moſt triumphant manner, his dependance upon God? Pſal. xviii. 1, 2, 3. "I will love thee, O Lord, my ſtrength. The Lord is "my rock, and my fortreſs, and my deliverer; my God, "my ſtrength, in whom I will truſt; my buckler, and the "horn of my ſalvation, and my high tower. I will call "upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praiſed; ſo ſhall I "be ſaved from mine enemies." Pſal. lxii. 5, 6, 7. "My "ſoul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is "from him. He only is my rock and my ſalvation; he "is my defence; I ſhall not be moved. In God is my "ſalvation and my glory; the rock of my ſtrength, and "my refuge is in God." Pſal. cxlvi. 5, 6. "Happy is he "that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whoſe hope is "in the Lord his God; which made heaven and earth, "the ſea, and all that therein is, which keepeth truth for "ever."

My brethren, this truſt and dependance on God is a very conſiderable part of the reſt and comfort of the believer's ſoul. He is, on all hands, ſurrounded with enemies, liable to ſuffering, expoſed to temptations. The more he knoweth of himſelf, the more he feels his own inherent weakneſs and inſufficiency. But, in God, he ſees full and adequate proviſion for all his wants, Pſalm xxxiv. 22. "The Lord redeemeth the ſoul of his ſervants; and "none of them that truſt in him ſhall be deſolate."

This truſt is alſo, in a particular manner, generated, by remembring the paſt goodneſs, or by a ſenſe of the recent mercy of God. We have daily experience of our own

weakneſs and unſteadineſs in this reſpect. When our hopes are in any meaſure diſappointed; when calamities threaten; when afflictions viſit us, we are ready to yield to the dark ſuggeſtions of fear and deſpondence; but when we contemplate the great goodneſs of God on former occaſions, or when we have met with any ſingular manifeſtation of his grace and favor, it ſerves to ſtrengthen our confidence, and often, indeed, to cover us with ſhame for our unbelief and diſtruſt. On the whole, then, a believer who imitates the Pſalmiſt in this expreſſion, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*, may be ſuppoſed to ſay, "Thou haſt taſted, O my ſoul, of the loving kindneſs of "God! he hath brought thee out of deep waters; he hath "calmed thy fears; he hath ſet thy feet upon a rock; he "hath eſtabliſhed thy goings; Bluſh, bluſh! when thou "conſidereſt how eaſily thy confidence was ſhaken; how "prone thou waſt to ſink under affliction; and, upon every "new trial, to doubt his power, and diſtruſt his promiſe. "But, now, return unto thy reſt; lay aſide thy fears, "which have ſo unhappy an influence both on thy pro-"greſs and comfort. Commit thy ways to him, and he "will bring thy deſires to paſs."

I come now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid: And, 1ſt, From what hath been ſaid, you may obſerve one great branch of the ſinfulneſs of the world in general; forgetfulneſs of God; and unthankfulneſs for his mercies. How little ſenſe of the divine goodneſs is in the hearts of men? how formal, cold, and frozen their language in praiſe? how languid their endeavors to ſerve him, from whoſe indulgent hand every bleſſing they enjoy flows? One would think that here might be ſome hold even of worldly men, who have not wholly extinguiſhed the light of natural conſcience. The greateſt part of this diſcourſe has been directed to thoſe of another character. Suffer me, now, to ſpeak a little immediately to them. You are not inſenſible to worldly comforts; on the contrary, you love them too ardently; you ſeek them too eagerly; you indulge them too liberally. Conſider, I beſeech you, who it is that

bestowed them; who it is, that, when he pleaseth, can blast them to you, or withdraw them from you. O the blindness and infatuation of mortal men! How passing and transitory are all created comforts! How certain and speedy the approach of death and judgment! Think what return you have made for all the goodness of God toward you from the womb even till now. And let me beg every hearer to recollect how far he stands indebted to God for continued health, for plentiful provision, for remarkable deliverances, for early instruction, for providential warnings. And if God, by his Spirit, has raised convictions in your minds, or earnestly pleaded with you in his gospel, in what a terrifying light will all this despised goodness appear, when you come to the brink of that gulf which separates you from an eternal world, but, above all, when you appear before God in an unembodied state? It is my duty to set this before you with plainness and fidelity; it is your present privilege, that you hear the things that belong to your everlasting peace. May God himself write them upon your hearts, and constrain you to flee, by faith, to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.

2dly. Let me also beseech every serious person, who now hears me, to consider how far he hath sinned against God and his own comfort, by forgetting the goodness of God, both in common and special mercies. It is surprising to think how little we make conscience of this duty, and even when it is remembered in some measure, in what a lifeless, heartless manner it is performed. How little proportion is there between the prayers of distress, and the songs of deliverance? how little sense upon our minds of the many gracious interpositions of divine Providence in our favor? If he hath invited us to communion with himself; if he hath brought us into the secret chambers, and made his banner over us to be love, how soon is it forgotten? how little desire of its continuance? what faint endeavors to recover it? how little concern to improve it? Strange, indeed, that some, after tasting of the heavenly manna, should feel so unseemly a longing after the flesh-pots of Egypt.

But do you not ſin as much againſt intereſt and comfort, as your duty? To forget a mercy, is to loſe it; to give thanks for it, is to preſerve and increaſe it. It is a very common miſtake for ſerious perſons to ſit brooding over their ſorrows, and, by that means, at once, to increaſe their ſufferings, and to prevent their deliverance. I do not know a more uſeful direction to melancholy or dejected Chriſtians, than by a deliberate effort of mind, from a ſenſe of duty, to recollect, and give praiſe to God for the many mercies which he hath beſtowed on them. This may be a happy mean of ſilencing their complaints, of turning the tide of their affections, and giving them "beauty for aſhes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the "garment of praiſe for the ſpirit of heavineſs." Is not thankfulneſs the improvement of mercies? and hath not God ſaid, to him that "hath ſhall be given, and he ſhall "have more abundantly; and from him that hath not "ſhall be taken away even that which he ſeemeth to "have."

3dly, I ſhall conclude, with offering the three following directions to thoſe who are truly ſenſible of the goodneſs of God.

1. Be circumſpect and watchful; though a thankful frame of ſpirit is of great advantage, both for your ſanctification and peace, yet it is not out of the reach of temptation; let it not produce pride, ſecurity or ſelf-ſufficiency. It is an excellent direction given by the Pſalmiſt to men in high ſtation and proſperity, Pſalm ii. 11, "Serve the "Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Take heed alſo, leſt it degenerate into carnal and ſenſual joy, making you reſt with complacency in the creature, inſtead of being led by it to place your delight and happineſs in the unchangeable Creator.

2. Be public-ſpirited and uſeful; if the Lord hath dealt bountifully with you, commend his ſervice, and ſpeak to his praiſe. This was often the reſolution and practice of the Pſalmiſt David, Pſalm lxvi. 16. "Come "and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what "he hath done for my ſoul." Pſal. cxlv. 5, 6, 7. "I will "ſpeak of the glorious honor of thy majeſty, and of thy

" wondrous works; and men ſhall ſpeak of the might of " thy terrible acts; and I will declare thy greatneſs. They " ſhall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodneſs, " and ſhall ſing of thy righteouſneſs." Let me recommend this particularly to Chriſtians of age and experience. It gives religion a very diſcouraging aſpect to younger perſons, when ſuch have nothing to utter but complaints. On the contrary, where can we behold a more edifying ſight, than an aged perſon ready to bear teſtimony to the peace and comfort of true religion, dying by neceſſity to the pleaſures and gaities of time, but living above them on the earneſt of his future inheritance; and, inſtead of a fretful ſpirit ariſing from the frailties of a tottering frame, preſerving a chearfulneſs and ſerenity of mind, in the hope of a bleſſed reſurrection.—I imagine I hear ſome ſay, nothing is more true; but, alas! I am not the perſon: I ſee nothing in me, but cauſes of complaint, or grounds of fear. I believe it is ſo with all; but you have miſtaken, or perverted the meaning of the exhortation. I did not adviſe you to boaſt of yourſelf, but to ſpeak to the praiſe of God. I believe it is good, in moſt caſes, to reſiſt deſponding fears, as ſo many temptations, and ſend them away, as hinderers of your duty, without a reply. Or, may I not juſtly ſay, admitting the truth of all that you can advance againſt yourſelves, is it not but ſo much the more reaſonable, that you ſhould ſay with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10, " I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the mer- " cies, and of all the truth, that thou haſt ſhewed unto " thy ſervant."

3. Be frequent and diligent in ſecret prayer. This is the way to preſerve your watchfulneſs, and to increaſe your uſefulneſs. The more you converſe with God in ſecret, you will ſpeak with the more judgment and profit to men in public. This is the way to diſpoſe of your complaints. What ſignifies repeating them to men, who may deſpiſe you, and, at beſt, can only pity you, when you may carry them to God, who can effectually help you? Speak as much ill of yourſelves to him as you pleaſe; but be ſo juſt as to ſpeak honorably of him, and his ſervice, to others who converſe with you.—Now, may the Lord

ſupply all your wants, from his riches in glory, by Chriſt Jeſus. May he give you the ſanctified uſe of every ſtep of his providence, whether of mercy or of trial. "May "the God of peace, Heb. xiii. 20, 21, that brought again "from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great Shepherd of the "ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, "make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, "working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, "through Jeſus Chriſt; to whom be glory for ever and "ever. Amen."

A VIEW OF THE GLORY OF GOD HUMBLING TO THE SOUL.

SERMON 22.

JOB xlii. 5, 6.

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

MY brethren, we can have no experimental knowledge; and, indeed, we have not much diſtinct knowledge at all of the nature of religion, as it takes place among angels, and other intelligent beings, who have kept their firſt eſtate, and never were polluted by ſin. From ſome things, however, recorded in ſcripture, we have reaſon to believe that they appear before God with the greateſt lowlineſs and ſelf-abaſement, that they are at all times deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of the infinite diſproportion between themſelves, as derived, dependant, limited, imperfect beings, and the eternal, immutable, omnipotent Jehovah. Thus in the viſion of Iſaiah, in the ſixth chapter of that book, verſe 1, 2, 3, "In the "year that King Uzziah died, I ſaw the Lord ſitting upon "a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the "temple. Above it ſtood the ſeraphims; each one had "ſix wings; with twain he covered his face, and with "twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. "And one cried unto another, and ſaid, Holy, holy, holy,

" is the Lord of Hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glo-
" ry." But if this is the caſe with theſe exalted and happy ſpirits, how much more muſt a deep humiliation of mind be neceſſary to us, who, by ſin, have rendered ourſelves the juſt objects of divine wrath, and whoſe hope of ſalvation is founded only on the riches of divine grace? We ought never to forget, that every inſtance of the favor of God to man, is not to be conſidered as the exerciſe of goodneſs to the worthy, nay, not merely as bounty to the needy, or help to the miſerable, but mercy to the guilty.

For this reaſon, as repentance is neceſſary to every ſinner, in order to his reconciliation with God, ſo thoſe Chriſtians preſerve the juſteſt views of their preſent ſtate and character, as well as the foundation of their hope, who frequently renew this ſalutary exerciſe. I cannot help ſaying further, that thoſe make the wiſeſt proviſion for the preſervation of their inward peace, who frequently water that tender plant with the tears of penitential ſorrow. To aſſiſt you in this exerciſe, and to point out the proper grounds of it, I have choſen to inſiſt a little on theſe words, in which you ſee the effect which a diſcovery of the glory and majeſty of God had upon his ſervant Job: *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.*

It is not neceſſary to my preſent purpoſe, to enter far into the diſpute between Job and his friends, although, no doubt, the words of the text have an evident relation to it. The controverſy ſeems plainly to have turned upon this point. His friends finding him in deep diſtreſs, under the moſt complicated affliction, would needs have it, that no good man could be ſo frowned upon by a righteous God; and therefore, that his former profeſſion muſt have been hypocritical and falſe. This is evident from the manner in which Eliphaz opens the charge againſt him, chap. iv. 6, 7, 8, 9. " Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, " thy hope, and the uprightneſs of thy ways? Remember, " I pray thee, who ever periſhed, being innocent? or " where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have ſeen,

" they that plow iniquity, and ſow wickedneſs, reap the " ſame. By the blaſt of God they periſh, and by the " breath of his noſtrils are they conſumed." In oppoſition to this, Job aſſerts and maintains his integrity in general, and withal, affirms their opinion to be falſe, for that God, in his juſt and ſovereign providence, brings affliction both on the righteous and the wicked. That this is the propoſition which he all along endeavors to ſupport, is plain, as from many other paſſages, ſo particularly from chap. ix. 22. " This is one thing, therefore I ſaid it, he " deſtroyeth the perfect, and the wicked."

Thus ſtood the matter, in diſpute, between Job and his friends, in which, though that good man had ſupported the truth, on the ſubject of divine Providence; yet, in the heat of the debate, and the anguiſh of his own ſufferings, he had let fall ſome expreſſions, not only of impatience, but of diſreſpect to the conduct of the Lord his Maker. For theſe he was firſt reproved by Elihu, and afterwards, with unſpeakable force and majeſty, by God himſelf, who aſſerts the ſovereignty of his power, and the righteouſneſs of his providence. On this diſcovery of the glory of divine perfection, the ſufferer was deeply humbled, and expreſſes a ſenſe of his own vileneſs and folly, in the 4th and 5th verſes of the fortieth chapter: " Behold, I am " vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay mine hand " upon my mouth. Once have I ſpoken, but I will not " anſwer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." And, again, in the beginning of the forty-ſecond chapter, concluding with the words of the text.

It is not improbable, from the beginning of the thirty-eighth chapter, that it pleaſed God to give Job ſome viſible repreſentation of his glory and omnipotence. This was not unuſual, in ancient times, before the canon of the ſcripture was cloſed. But, no doubt, the diſcovery which chiefly affected him was inward and ſpiritual, carrying home, with irreſiſtible force, the great truths which we ſtill find recorded in a manner inimitably noble and ſublime. *I have heard of thee*, ſays he, *by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee.* This implies, that, as ſeeing gives a more diſtinct, full, and ſatisfying knowledge of

any thing, than hearing of it only by the report of others, the impreſſions which he then had of the majeſty and glory of God, were far ſtronger than any he had ever felt before. —*Therefore*, ſays he, *I abhor myſelf.* It filled him with ſelf-lothing and abhorrence.—*And I repent in duſt and aſhes.* This is either, in general, a ſtrong expreſſion of deep penitence and ſorrow, of which duſt and aſhes were anciently the ſigns; or, perhaps, it has a particular reference to his preſent miſerable and afflicted ſtate, deſcribed in chapter ii. 8. "And he took him a potſherd to ſcrape "himſelf withal; and he ſat down among the aſhes." As if he had ſaid, Lord, I am deeply ſenſible of the evil of every raſh word, of every rebellious thought. I confeſs, that thou haſt afflicted me in truth and faithfulneſs; and that, in this low and deſolate condition, it becomes me to lay my hand upon my mouth, and to repent of that guilt which would have fully juſtified thy providence in a ſtill heavier ſtroke.

The words thus explained, preſent to us this general and moſt important truth, that a diſcovery of the perfection, glory, and majeſty of God, has a powerful influence in leading us to repentance; and that the clearer this diſcovery is, the more ſincere will be our repentance, and the deeper our humiliation. In diſcourſing further on this ſubject, at preſent, I propoſe, only, through Divine aſſiſtance,

I. To make ſome obſervations, at once to illuſtrate and confirm the propoſition above laid down, as to the effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God. And, in the

II. And laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what ſhall be ſaid.

I. Then, I am to make ſome obſervations, at once to explain and confirm the propoſition juſt now laid down, as to the effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God. But, before we enter on what is principally intended, I muſt intreat your attention to the following preliminary remarks:

1. That this truth will hold equally certain in whatever way the diſcovery is made. It may pleaſe God to manifeſt himſelf to his people in very different ways. Sometimes it may be in a way wholly, or in part, miraculous, as in the caſe of Job, Iſaiah, and ſome others mentioned in ſcripture; ſometimes by affecting diſpenſations of Providence; ſometimes by his ordinances, or inſtituted worſhip, accompanied with the operation of his Spirit; and ſometimes by this laſt alone, without the help or acceſſion of any outward mean.

2. I hope it will not be thought improper, that, in reaſoning on the influence of a diſcovery of the glory of God, I ſometimes bring in view the additional manifeſtations given us in the goſpel, of the divine glory. This, to be ſure, could not be ſuppoſed to make a part of what was diſcovered to Job, to whom that myſtery, hid from ages and generations, and only opened in the fulneſs of time, was very obſcurely, if at all known. But the example, afforded us in the text, leads us to a general truth; in the illuſtration and application of which, we may make uſe of all that is known to us of the nature and government of God. The

3. And principal remark is, that, when I ſpeak of the influence of a diſcovery of the glory of God, I mean an internal and ſpiritual diſcovery, and not ſuch a knowledge as is merely ſpeculative, and reſts in the underſtanding, without deſcending into the heart. There is a common diſtinction to be met with in almoſt every practical writer, between knowledge merely ſpeculative, that ſwims in the head, and practical or ſaving knowledge, that dwells in and governs the heart. That there is ſuch a diſtinction in fact, experience obliges every man to confeſs: but it is extremely difficult to ſpeak in a clear and preciſe manner upon it; to tell wherein it conſiſts; or to ſhow how theſe two ſorts of knowledge differ otherwiſe, than by their effects. Yet even to point out their radical difference, ſeems neceſſary to me, who propoſe to ſhow the happy influence and powerful efficacy of this knowledge, when it is of the right kind.

For this purpoſe, my brethren, be pleaſed to obſerve, that a barren ſpeculative knowledge of God, is that which fixes chiefly on his natural perfections; or, if it be ſuppoſed to take in ſuch as are moral, it is only to reaſon upon them as an object of ſcience; but the true knowledge of God, is an inward and ſpiritual diſcovery of the amiableneſs and excellence of his moral perfections; or, to ſpeak more in the ſcripture ſtyle, to perceive that he is indeed "glorious in his holineſs. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord "of hoſts." This is the language of celeſtial adoration, of thoſe who "ſee him as he is, and know even as they "are known." The ſame, in ſome meaſure, is the view given to every real child of God on earth, and, alone, ſerves to diſtinguiſh his children of every rank, and every degree of capacity, from others of an oppoſite character. Let me ſuppoſe a poor Chriſtian, weak in underſtanding, and unaſſiſted by education, who is witneſs to any extraordinary act of divine power: for example, a thunder ſtorm, ſeeming to rend the heavens aſunder, and either laying ſome ancient and venerable pile in aſhes, or, perhaps, ſtriking ſome perſons to death, in a manner ſwifter than thought; he is immediately affected with a ſenſe of the ſovereignty of the Lord of nature, the holineſs of every part of his will, the duty of abſolute ſubjection in the creature, and the ſinfulneſs of every rebellious thought. But, above all, he is ſtruck with a ſenſe of the malignity of ſin, which has introduced ſo many natural evils, and, as it were, armed the incenſed elements in their Maker's cauſe. Such a perſon, though he can expreſs his thoughts but very poorly, nay, though he can hardly ſpeak to others with coherence or conſiſtency, ſees much more of God, than he who can reaſon on the planetary ſyſtem; who can trace the beauty, variety, and extent of the Creator's works, and thence infer the neceſſity of a ſelf-exiſtent, almighty, and intelligent firſt cauſe. The one may expatiate on the wonderful works, or the wiſe purpoſes, of the Author of nature; the other feels and confeſſes him to be God. Alas! my brethren, we ſee too often, that knowledge and holineſs in us, do not bear proportion one to another. We ſee every day examples of the greateſt

intellectual abilities, the nobleſt natural talents, being abuſed to the worſt of purpoſes; for ſuch I muſt always reckon, their ſerving no higher end than to adorn and ſet off the poſſeſſor, or burn incenſe to human vanity.—By a diſcovery, then, of the perfections, majeſty, and glory of God, I underſtand the glory of his infinite holineſs; that holineſs which is inſeparable from his nature, which ſhines in all his works, and in all his ways.

Theſe obſervations being premiſed, let us now conſider what influence a diſcovery of the glory of God hath in producing repentance, and increaſing humility. And, in the

1ſt Place, It hath this effect, as it tends to convince us of ſin, and particularly, to bring to light theſe innumerable evils, which a deceitful heart often, in a great meaſure, hides from its own view. There is, if I may ſpeak ſo, a light and glory in the preſence of God which diſcovers and expoſes the works of darkneſs. That a view of the divine Majeſty has a ſtrong tendency to give us a deep ſenſe of our own ſinfulneſs, is plain from many ſcripture examples. That of Job, in our text, is one directly in point. Another you have in Iſaiah, ch. vi. 5. where the reflection of the prophet, on a view of the divine glory, is, "Wo is me! for I am undone; becauſe I am a man "of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midſt of a people of "unclean lips: for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the "Lord of hoſts." Another inſtance you may ſee in the apoſtle John, who upon a view of the Redeemer in his glory, was, in a manner, deprived of life, through exceſſive fear. Rev. i. 17. "And when I ſaw him, I fell at "his feet as dead." The only other inſtance I mention is of the apoſtle Peter, who, on the unexpected appearance, or rather from a view of the power of Chriſt, manifeſted in a miracle, was immediately ſtruck with a ſenſe of guilt, Luke v. 8. "When Simon Peter ſaw it, he fell down at "Jeſus' knees, ſaying, depart from me, for I am ſinful "man, O Lord."

It is not difficult to explain how a view of the divine holineſs tends to diſcover and to affect us with a ſenſe of our ſinfulneſs. Nothing makes any quality appear ſo

ſenſibly as a compariſon with its oppoſite. The application of a ſtraight rule marks the obliquity of a crooked line; nay, it marks even the leaſt degree of variation, which by a leſs accurate trial would not have been diſcovered. Any piece of deformity appears more hideous and ſhocking when compared with perfect beauty. For the ſame reaſon, a clear view of the holineſs of God, and a ſenſe of his intimate preſence with us, tends to bring ſin to remembrance, as well as to cover us with confuſion for thoſe ſins, which before we were able to juſtify, palliate, or conceal. We are expreſsly aſſured that our firſt parents, immediately after eating the forbidden fruit, were ſenſible of their guilt, and I cannot think they were wholly inſenſible of the omniſcience and omnipreſence of God. Yet we find that their fear greatly increaſed (doubtleſs from a ſenſe of ſin) when they heard God's voice in the garden, Gen. iii. 8. "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking "in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his "wife hid themſelves from the preſence of the Lord God "amongſt the trees of the garden."

You may take a very plain and ſimple illuſtration of this from daily experience. Are there not ſome perſons of looſe principles and irregular practice, who, when by themſelves, or in ſociety like themſelves, juſtify many of their ſins, and to all appearance, commit them without remorſe, as innocent, if not laudable? But let the ſame perſons be carried into ſober company, eſpecially into the preſence of any perſon eminent for piety and gravity, and they will be reſtrained and aſhamed, and not able to open their mouths in defence of their licentious carriage. The mere preſence of ſuch a perſon carries inſtant irreſiſtible conviction with it, by forcing a compariſon between piety and profanity; that is to ſay, good and evil, light and darkneſs. So certain a truth is this, that one of the ancient heathen authors gives it as a rule for moral conduct, "that men ſhould always imagine themſelves in the pre-"ſence of ſuch a man as Cato, renowned for gravity and "virtue." But if the fancied preſence of a mortal, in whom ſome faint rays, if I may ſpeak ſo, of the divine Image appear by reflection, has ſo much influence, how

much greater would be the effect of a firm perſuaſion of the real preſence of a holy God, "who is of purer eyes "than to behold iniquity?" What is it elſe than this that makes wicked men flee the ſociety of the good as painful, and ſhun the thoughts of God as intolerable; ſo that it is the ſcripture character of ſuch, that they ſay unto their Maker, practically, "Depart from us, for we deſire not "the knowledge of thy ways."

2. A diſcovery of the glory of God ſerves to point out the evil of ſin, the aggravations of particular ſins, and to take away the excuſes of the ſinner. Let us remember what I obſerved in a preceding part of this diſcourſe, that it muſt be a diſcovery of the glory of the divine holineſs; not only a knowledge of the true God, and underſtanding what he is, but a view of his infinite glory and beauty in being ſuch. It muſt neceſſarily ſet the evil of ſin in the cleareſt light, that all ſin, as ſuch, ſtrikes immediately at the very being and perfections of God. When the law of God ſhews us our ſins, we may be ready to complain of its ſtrictneſs and ſeverity, and wiſh to ſlip our necks from under the yoke. But when we ſee that the law could not be otherwiſe than it is, without being faulty; when we ſee that it is nothing elſe but a fair tranſcript of the moral perfections of God; and when we look up to the great and bright original, it muſt convince us that all ſin is a direct oppoſition to the nature, as well as a rebellion againſt the will of God. If he is infinitely perfect and glorious, ſin muſt be infinitely hateful and abominable. No man can plead for ſin, in any inſtance or in any degree, but he muſt blaſpheme the nature and perfections of God, to which it ſtands in oppoſition.

All men, indeed, by nature, are enemies to God himſelf, in their minds, by wicked works; and they hate his law, becauſe it is ſpiritual and pure. There are alſo too many in this age, who have very relaxed principles as to the extent and obligation of the law, and, of conſequence, very ſlight thoughts of the evil of ſin. But a view of the glory of God rectifies, at once, theſe fatal errors, and carries home ſuch conviction of the rights of the Creator, the obligation and ſubjection of the creature, and the beauty

and excellence of that image which was ſtained by ſin, as forces us to adopt the language of the Holy Ghoſt; "How "evil and how bitter a thing is it to depart from the living "God!" God grant that there may be many in this aſſembly, who underſtand and feel the force of this truth! There is need, my brethren, to attend to it; for all convictions of ſin, which do not proceed from this ſource, or do not neceſſarily include this view, whatever pain or terror they may occaſion, will prove empty and fruitleſs at laſt. Though there may be a ſlaviſh fear of the power of God, unleſs there be a view of the infinite evil of ſin, there cannot be any laſting and ſaving change.

The ſame view alſo points out the aggravation of particular ſins. The more clearly we underſtand the nature of God, our relation to, and dependance upon him, the more will we perceive the aggravation of every ſin which burſts aſunder theſe bonds. A view of the glory of God muſt either be general or particular; or, perhaps, for the moſt part, there is a mixture of both. My meaning is, that when there is a diſcovery of the glory of God in general, there is often, at the ſame time, a peculiar and ſtriking diſplay of ſome one attribute, of power, wiſdom, juſtice, or mercy. Now how ſtrongly does this impreſs upon the mind, a ſenſe of the evil of thoſe ſins which ſtrike directly againſt that perfection which happens to be ſet in the ſtrongeſt point of view? When any diſplay is given of the omniſcience of God, how does it make us ſenſible of the impiety and folly of ſecret ſins? Dan. ii. 47. "The "King anſwered unto Daniel, and ſaid, Of a truth it is, "that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, "and a revealer of ſecrets, ſeeing thou couldeſt reveal this "ſecret." When the power of God is made manifeſt, how does it aggravate the guilt of preſumption and confidence? Iſa. xlv. 9. "Wo unto him that ſtriveth with "his Maker: let the potſherd ſtrive with the potſherds of "the earth. Shall the clay ſay to him that faſhioneth it, "what makeſt thou? or thy work, he hath no hands?"

When the wiſdom of God is diſplayed, doth not then all diſtruſt appear highly criminal? Ought we not to ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxvii. 1. "The Lord is my light,

" and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the Lord is the " ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid?" When we have a view of our abſolute dependance upon, and unſpeakable obligations to the divine bounty, what a ſenſe does this give us of the ſin of unthankfulneſs, and forgetfulneſs of God? Of how many unhappy ſenſualiſts may this complaint be made? Iſa. i. 2, 3. " Hear, O heavens, " and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath ſpoken. I have " nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have re- " belled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and " the aſs his maſter's crib: but Iſrael doth not know, my " people doth not conſider." Without any further enumeration, it will appear undeniable, that the clearer the diſcovery of the glory of God, the more muſt not only the evil of ſin in general appear, but every particular crime muſt be loaded with new aggravations. I cannot help mentioning here, in a few words, that this is the immediate effect of a diſcovery of the glory of God, as it ſhines in Jeſus Chriſt. The unmerited, unparalleled love, manifeſted to ſinners in the goſpel, greatly aggravates their ingratitude and rebellion. And the more that believers reflect upon their own conduct, and compare it with the grace and condeſcenſion of their Redeemer, the more they muſt *abhor themſelves, and repent in dust and aſhes.*

I only add, on this head, that a diſcovery of the glory of God takes away the excuſes of the ſinner. How prone men are to excuſe and palliate their ſins, we all know by experience. It is a light ſenſe of the evil of ſin, that leads us to commit it; and there is no reaſon to be ſurpriſed, if this, joined with ſelf-intereſt, makes us ingenious in forming an apology for it after the commiſſion. Hence often ariſe hard thoughts of the threatenings of God againſt ſin, as ſevere. Hence alſo unbelieving thoughts, which will not admit, that ever he will fulfil his word, or execute the threatened judgment. But a diſcovery of the glory of God, particularly of his infinite holineſs, by ſhewing the evil of ſin in its proper colours, ſtops every mouth, drags the ſinner into the preſence of his Judge, and ſtrips the guilty criminal of every vain plea. We ſee plainly, in the caſe of Job, that he had ſuch a view of the power, do-

minion, and abſolute ſovereignty of God, as put him entirely to ſilence, and convinced him, that there was no room for contending; no place for compariſon between ſo unequal (muſt I call them) parties, God and man, Job xl. 4. "Behold I am vile; what ſhall I anſwer thee? I "will lay my hand upon my mouth."

This right of ſovereignty in God, and the duty of abſolute, immediate, unconditional ſubjection in the creature, I find plainly and frequently eſtabliſhed in ſcripture. It is, indeed, entirely in this ſtyle, which may well be called the ſtyle of the King of kings, that God ſpeaks to Job in the four chapters preceding that where my text lies. Though he is brought in ſpeaking, to reſolve a difficulty in providence; yet, you may obſerve, he does not ſay one word as to the juſtice of his proceeding; but, under many of the ſtrongeſt images, ſets forth his irreſiſtible power, chap. xxxviii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, "Who is this that "darkeneth counſel by words without knowledge? Gird "up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, "and anſwer thou me. Where waſt thou when I laid "the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou haſt "underſtanding. Who hath laid the meaſures thereof, "if thou knoweſt? or who hath ſtretched the line upon it? "Whereupon are the foundations thereof faſtened? or "who laid the corner ſtone thereof?" And, again, chap. xl. 8, 9, 10, 11. "Wilt thou alſo diſannul my judgment? "wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayeſt be righteous? "Haſt thou an arm like God? or canſt thou thunder with "a voice like him? Deck thyſelf now with majeſty and "excellency, and array thyſelf with glory and beauty. "Caſt abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every "one that is proud, and abaſe him."

The ſovereignty of God, is what, of all things elſe, ſinners, while they continue in that character, are leaſt capable of underſtanding, and leaſt willing to ſubmit to. This is not to be wondered at; becauſe the very nature of ſin conſiſts in caſting off our allegiance, and, as far as in us lies, rejecting the authority of God. But, my brethren, a real diſcovery of his glory, at once, raiſes him to the throne, and humbles us at his footſtool, and is, as if we

heard a voice from heaven, addreſſed to us in the following ſtriking words, Iſa. ii. 10, 11. "Enter into the rock, and "hide thee in the duſt, for fear of the Lord, and for the "glory of his majeſty. The lofty looks of man ſhall be "humbled, and the haughtineſs of men ſhall be bowed "down; and the Lord alone ſhall be exalted in that day." One who hath ſo known God, will perceive, that there can be no more proper reply to objections, on the part of man, to the divine procedure, than that of the apoſtle Paul, Rom. ix. 20. "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that re-"plieſt againſt God?"

3. A diſcovery of the glory of God ſerves to point out the danger of ſin. It is the hope of impunity, that emboldens the ſinner to tranſgreſs, and to perſiſt in his tranſgreſſions. For this reaſon, we find the ſcriptures, in general, attributing the impenitence of ſinners to theſe two great ſources, ignorance and unbelief, Pſal. xiv. 1. "The "fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God." And, in verſe 4. "Have all the workers of iniquity no know-"ledge?" that is to ſay, ſuch bold rebellion in their conduct plainly diſcovers the atheiſm of their hearts. To the ſame purpoſe, Pſalm x. 11, 13, "He hath ſaid in his "heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his face; he will "never ſee it.—Wherefore doth the wicked contemn "God? He hath ſaid in his heart, thou wilt not require "it." But a diſcovery of the divine glory, at once deſtroys the foundation of this ſtupid ſecurity, and impious preſumption. It realizes the very being of God more than before, as is plainly implied in the words of Job: *I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee.* It makes his preſence ſenſible, and teaches us, that "all things are naked before him." So that there is no hope of lying concealed. It ſets before us his holineſs and juſtice; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. So that, while his nature continues the ſame, the guilty and impenitent cannot poſſibly obtain pardon. Above all, it ſets before us the terror of his power, which is infinite and boundleſs; ſo that nothing can be more vain, than for the ſinner to hope either to eſcape or reſiſt.

Agreeably to all this, we find, that, in the holy ſcriptures, in which God hath been pleaſed to make himſelf known to us by external revelation, it is by aſſerting, and, as it were, diſplaying, and producing to view, the glory of his infinite perfection, that he endeavours to deter us from ſin, and animate or encourage us to duty. When God gave the law to the children of Iſrael, he gave them, at the ſame time, a diſplay of his greatneſs and majeſty in a very awful manner. To expreſs his ſovereign authority, and the abſolute propriety he had in them, he introduces it with theſe words: "I am the Lord, thy God, "which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the "houſe of bondage." You may alſo remember, how often, in appointing the ſeveral Moſaic conſtitutions, theſe ſignificative words are repeated, *I am the Lord.* In the ſame manner, to impreſs his people with a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, as committed againſt ſuch a God, he declares his own abſolute dominion, Mal. i. 14. "But curſed be "the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and vow-"eth and ſacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am "a great King, ſaith the Lord of hoſts, and my name is "dreadful among the heathen."

When he would give his people a deep conviction of the folly and danger of ſecret ſins, he ſets forth his omniſcience and omnipreſence, Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. "Am I a "God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any hide "himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee him? ſaith "the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? ſaith the "Lord." When he would expreſs the danger of obſtinacy and diſobedience, he gives a very lively idea of his infinite power, Jer. v. 22. "Fear ye not me? ſaith the "Lord: will ye not tremble at my preſence, which have "placed the ſand for the bound of the ſea, by a perpetual "decree, that it cannot paſs it; and though the waves "thereof toſs themſelves, yet can they not prevail; though "they roar, yet can they not paſs over it."

The very ſame thing he doth to encourage the truſt of his own people, Iſa. xliv. 6. "Thus ſaith the Lord, the "King of Iſrael, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hoſts, I "am the firſt, and I am the laſt, and beſides me there is

" no God." When he would make us ſenſible, that, if we continue in ſin, it is impoſſible for us to eſcape puniſhment, what a terrible repreſentation does he give of his dreadful and irreſiſtible vengeance? Prophecies of Nah. i. 5, 6. " The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, " and the earth is burnt at his preſence, yea, the world, " and all that dwell therein. Who can ſtand before his " indignation? and who can abide in the fierceneſs of his " anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks " are thrown down by him."

Thus we ſee, that God, in ſcripture, reveals the glory of his own nature, as the effectual means of reſtraining us in the commiſſion of ſin, or turning us from it; and plainly ſuppoſes, that nothing but ignorance of him can encourage ſinners in their rebellion. Neither can it be denied, that when there is an inward and powerful diſcovery of theſe truths to the mind, it muſt lead us to repentance, and lay us proſtrate before his throne, in obedience and ſubmiſſion. Who, that knoweth the Almighty, will run upon the thick boſſes of his buckler? or will not rather uſe this dutiful language of Job, chap. ix, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. " I know it is ſo of a truth; but how ſhould man be juſt " with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot an- " ſwer him one of a thouſand. He is wiſe in heart, and " mighty in ſtrength: who hath hardened himſelf againſt " him, and hath proſpered? which removeth the moun- " tains, and they know not; which overturneth them in " his anger; which ſhaketh the earth out of her place, " and the pillars thereof tremble."

4. In the laſt place, a view of the divine glory tends to leads us to repentance, as it ſets forth his infinite mercy, and affords encouragement to, as well as points out the profit of repentance. Juſt and proper conceptions of God cannot be given us, without including his great mercy. This bright perfection ſhone, even on Mount Sinai, through all the terrors of that legal diſpenſation, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. " And he ſaid, I beſeech thee, ſhew me " thy glory. And he ſaid, I will make all my goodneſs to " paſs before thee; and I will proclaim the name of the " Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I

" will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will " shew mercy." Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. " And the Lord " descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and " proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord pass- " ed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord " God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abun- " dant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thou- " sands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." Without the knowledge of this amiable attribute, all the other perfections of God would signify little to bring us to true repentance. Without this, they carry nothing in them but unmixed terror to the guilty. Without this, therefore, the consideration of his infinite holiness and purity, his inflexible justice, and almighty power, would only serve to drive us further from him, by throwing us into absolute despair. But when, to all the other perfections of God, we join his infinite mercy, the true knowledge of him serves not only to destroy criminal presumption, but to animate to dutiful submission. Thus the Psalmist expresses himself, Psalm cxxx. 3, 4, " If thou " Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall " stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou " mayest be feared." Here you may observe, that, when he says, " there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest " be feared," he not only means, that there is encouragement to serve God, but that his mercy itself leads to that filial reverence which is so essential a part of true penitence. The greatness and mercy of God happily conspire in melting the heart of the sinner. There is an expression of singular beauty, Hos. iii. 5. " Afterward shall " the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord, their " God, and David, their King; and shall fear the Lord, " and his goodness, in the latter days."

This leads me to observe, that it is in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, that we have the brightest and clearest display of divine mercy. It is in Christ, that we have the true and saving discovery of the glory and perfections of God. And it is particularly in him, that we have an united illustration, and joint display of greatness and goodness, of majesty and mercy. In the under-

taking of our bleſſed Redeemer, we have a very clear and affecting view of thoſe perfections, that ſhew the evil of ſin, and the danger of the ſinner. Never did the holineſs of God ſhine brighter, or his hatred and indignation againſt ſin, appear with greater terror, than when the ſword of his juſtice was drawn out againſt *the man who is his fellow.* When God ſwept away a polluted world by an univerſal deluge; when he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimſtone from heaven; when the earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Theſe were terrible proofs of his hatred of ſin, of the juſtice and holineſs of his nature. Yet were they, after all, but faint evidences, in compariſon of what were given, when "he who was in the form of "God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, "—was found in faſhion as a man, and became obedient "unto death, even the death of the croſs."

But, at the ſame time, in this great event, hath he not magnified his love? Rom. v. 8. "But God hath com-"mended his love towards us, in that while we were yet "ſinners, Chriſt died for us." How ſhall we think or ſpeak on this unfathomable ſubject? Chriſt Jeſus is the fruit of the Father's everlaſting love to ſinners of mankind. How great the giver! how unſpeakable the gift! how mean and worthleſs the objects of his love! God is love. Power, wiſdom, holineſs, and juſtice, ſhine, indeed, in the doctrine of the croſs. But, above all, grace and mercy prevail, "and reign through righteouſneſs unto "eternal life." What a melting view to every convinced ſinner! Zech. xii. 10. "—They ſhall look upon me "whom they have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for "him, as one that mourneth for his only ſon, and ſhall "be in bitterneſs for him, as one that is in bitterneſs for "his firſt-born." Muſt they not, with Job, *abhor themſelves, and repent in duſt and aſhes?* This is a circumſtance frequently taken notice of with regard to the goſpel converts. Jer. xxxi. 9. "They ſhall come with "weeping; and with ſupplications will I lead them." Jer. v. 4, 5. "In thoſe days, and in that time, ſaith the "Lord, the children of Iſrael ſhall come, they, and the

" children of Judah together, going and weeping; they " ſhall go and ſeek the Lord, their God. They ſhall aſk " the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, ſaying, " Come, and let us join ourſelves to the Lord in a perpe- " tual covenant, that ſhall not be forgotten." I ſhall cloſe this head, by addreſſing to you the words of God to the children of Iſrael, Joel ii. 12, 13. " Therefore alſo " now, ſaith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your " heart, and with faſting, and with weeping, and with " mourning, and rend your heart, and not your gar- " ments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is " gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great " kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil."

I proceed, now, to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And,

1. You may learn, from this ſubject, the force and meaning of thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, in which the whole of religion is expreſſed by the knowledge of God. Thus, Prov. ix. 10. " The fear of the Lord is the beginning of " wiſdom; and the knowledge of the holy is underſtand- " ing." The ſame thing is affirmed by our bleſſed Saviour, John xvii. 3. " And this is life eternal, that they " might know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, " whom thou haſt ſent." On the other hand, wicked men are often deſcribed by this ſhort and expreſſive character, that they know not God, as in 2 Theſſ. i. 8. " —In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know " not God." The truth is, God is either wholly unknown, or greatly miſtaken by wicked men. None but his ſervants do truly ſee his glory; and the more they ſee of him, the more they are aſſimilated to him. Thus the apoſtle Paul deſcribes converſion in the following terms, 2 Cor. iv. 6. " For God, who commanded the light to ſhine out " of darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts, to give the light " of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of " Jeſus Chriſt." And, in the ſame epiſtle, chap. iii. 18, he thus deſcribes the progreſs of the chriſtian life, " But " we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glaſs, the

" glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame image, " from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may learn the great danger of a ſtate of ignorance. If repentance, which is the beginning of true religion, takes its riſe from a knowledge of the nature and perfections of God, does it not follow, that thoſe who are groſsly ignorant, are not only in a contemptible, but in a deplorable ſtate? that they muſt be ſtrangers to the power and practice of religion, and, dying in that condition, muſt periſh eternally? It is much to be lamented, that even amongſt us, who have the means of inſtruction in ſo great plenty, there are ſtill many who continue groſsly ignorant. How inexcuſable are thoſe parents, who do not make conſcience of diligently training up their children in the knowledge of the things that belong to their eternal peace? I muſt alſo intreat all heads of families, whom God hath enabled to hire the labor of others, ſeriouſly to think of the obligation that lies upon them, to inſtruct their ſervants in the principles of religion, and not ſuffer any under their roof to periſh for lack of knowledge. Do not think you have done enough, when you have given them food and wages, if you wholly neglect their precious ſouls. I do not expect to prevail upon you, faithfully to diſcharge this duty, by any arguments but thoſe drawn from the glory of God, and your own everlaſting intereſt; but I cannot help, at the ſame time, putting you in mind, that it is very much for your temporal intereſt. Depend upon it, the more conſcientiouſly you diſcharge your duty to them, the more honeſtly, diligently, and chearfully will they ſerve you. It is very common to hear complaints of the ſlothfulneſs, unfaithfulneſs, and inſolence of ſervants; but, if we conſider, ſeriouſly, what belongs to the duty of a maſter, there will be found, perhaps, as many, and as great faults, on this ſide as on the other. It is ſurpriſing, that ſome ſeem to expect, in a poor uneducated creature, all manner of decency of behavior, ſweetneſs of temper, integrity, and diligence, and are ready to ſtorm upon the leaſt defect, while, at the ſame time, they ſhow no example in their own conduct, but of a viſible neglect

of duty both to God and man. Oh! my brethren, have pity on the ignorant, especially the younger sort, who would learn, if they had teachers. Ignorance is always a secure, insensible state. They know nothing, and therefore they fear nothing. Public instruction is, in a great measure, useless to those who are not prepared for it by more familiar teaching at home. Let ministers speak never so plainly from the pulpit, it is still to many of them a strange language, which they do not comprehend.

3. From what hath been said on this subject, you may see the necessity of regeneration, or an inward change of heart, in order to real religion. You have heard above, that it is not a speculative knowledge of the nature and perfections of God, or understanding what he is, that leads to repentance, but a view of his excellence and amiableness, as glorious in his holiness. This none can have, but those who are in some measure transformed into the same image. Hence it is, that wicked men do not cherish, but avoid the thoughts of God. Hence it is, that extraordinary tokens of the divine power and presence, signal judgments, and unexpected strokes on themselves, or their relations, distress and terrify them, and bring them under a slavish bondage for a little, but produce no love; no desire of union; no cordial submission. Hence also appears the foolishness of that sinful, but general propensity in men, to ask after a sign, and to desire that other and different evidence should be given them of the truth of religion than God hath seen meet. We have an example of this in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded, Luke xvi. towards the close. There the rich man is represented, as intreating, that Lazarus might be sent to his brethren for their warning. When Abraham refers them to the revealed will of God, Moses and the prophets, he urges his request thus, ver. 30, "And he said, nay, "father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the "dead, they will repent;" to which the answer is given immediately, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, "neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from "the dead."

There have been others at different times, who have desired such extraordinary proofs; but they would of themselves, be attended with no real benefit. Though you had been on Mount Sinai with Moses, it would have produced terror, but no other effect, without a spiritual discovery of the real glory of God. See Exod. xix. 16. "And it came to pass, on the third day, in the morning, "that there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick "cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet "exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the "camp trembled." And the same book, ch. xx. 18, 19. "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the light-"nings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain "smoking; and when the people saw it, they removed, "and stood afar off: and they said unto Moses, speak thou "with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with "us, lest we die." Another evidence of the same thing, may be taken from the case of devils and damned spirits. They have, no doubt, a sensible demonstration of the being, and, probably, a very clear intellectual knowledge of the nature of God; yet hath it not any effect in changing their dispositions: on the contrary, the more they know of him, who is so opposite to their temper, they hate him the more; it inflames their natural enmity, and makes it rage with double violence. This, I think, appears very plainly, both from the reason of the thing, and from the following passages of scripture, Matth. viii. 29, it is said of two demoniacs: "And behold they cried out, saying, what "have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art "thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Mark v. 6, 7. "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and "worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, "what have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the "Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou tor-"ment me not." And again, Mark ix. 20. "And they "brought him unto him; and when he saw him, straight-"way the spirit tare him, and he fell on the ground, and "wallowed, foaming." From which passages, we may perceive, agreeable to what has been observed, that the presence of Christ increased, at once, the rage and mise-

ry of the unclean ſpirits. Let this excite us to pray, that it would pleaſe God to reveal himſelf to us by his Spirit, and give us the ſaving knowledge of him, as he is "in "Chriſt Jeſus, reconciling the world to himſelf."

4. Suffer me, on this occaſion, ſhortly to addreſs myſelf to thoſe, who are ſtrangers to true religion. Let me beſeech them, while they are yet in the way, and whilſt the Spirit of God is ſtriving with them, in his word and ordinances, to lay down the weapons of their rebellion againſt him, and to lay hold, by faith, on the atoning blood of Chriſt for their reconciliation and peace. Are there not ſome in this aſſembly, who have yet no knowledge of God, but that which makes his ſervice a burden, his Sabbaths a wearineſs, and his people contemptible or odious? Are there not ſome tender ſpirits, who are paſſionate lovers of this preſent world, but unable to bear the view of mortality and miſery in their fellow-creatures; who tremble at the gloom of a church-yard, or burying vault, and turn pale as aſhes at the ſight of a death's head, or an open grave? I beſeech you, my beloved hearers, to join, with the terror of divine power, the riches of divine grace; and let both conſtrain you to "acquaint yourſelves with "God, and be at peace, that thereby good may come un-"to you." I know no way, by which you may avoid meeting with the king of terrors; but you may ſet him at defiance under the protection of the King of kings. There is no profit in forgetting, but there is both honor and profit in conquering death. Some are unhappily ſucceſsful, for a ſeaſon, in baniſhing every diſmal idea from their minds. The falſe and flattering pleaſures of life engroſs their attention, and intoxicate their minds. But in a little time, Behold the ſupreme Judge "cometh with clouds, "and every eye ſhall ſee him, and they alſo which pierced "him; and all kindreds of the earth ſhall wail becauſe of "him." He is now beſeeching you with tenderneſs, and waiting on you with patience. Embrace, therefore, the happy ſeaſon. "Kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry, and ye "periſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a "little; bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

5. In the laſt place, you may ſee the reaſon why every truly good man, the more he groweth in religion, the more he groweth in humility. Growth in religion implies, or carries in it, a growing diſcovery of the glory of God, as it ſhines in his works, his word, his ordinances, his providence. This neceſſarily leads to ſelf-abaſement. O how contrary to religion is pride! But, above all others, how abſurd, criminal, intolerable, is ſpiritual pride? what a proof of ſelf-ignorance, as well as forgetfulneſs of God! The firſt views of a penitent are fixed on the enormities of his life; but when theſe are, in ſome meaſure, ſubdued, additional diſcoveries of the glory of God bring forth the latent corruptions of his heart. What affecting complaints does that eminent, zealous, faithful miniſter of Chriſt, the apoſtle Paul, make in the following well known paſſage, Rom. vii. 18. "For I know that in me (that is, "in my fleſh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is pre-"ſent with me; but how to perform that which is good, I "find not." And verſe 23, 24. "But I ſee another law "in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, "and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin, which "is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who "ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?" Nay, the cleareſt views which a believer can take of the riches of divine mercy through a Redeemer, though they afford unſpeakable conſolation in God, tend alſo deeply to humble him, under a ſenſe of his own unworthineſs. The doctrine of the croſs is not more refreſhing to the broken in heart, than it is abaſing to the proud; for it was choſen of God for this very purpoſe, "that no fleſh ſhould glory "in his preſence."

On the whole, my brethren, as you cannot live under the direction of a better habitual principle, ſo you cannot prepare for any act of ſolemn worſhip more properly, than by deep humility. To improve this diſpoſition, let me intreat you to make a ſerious and impartial ſearch into the ſins you have been guilty of, in heart and converſation, by omiſſion or commiſſion; by neglecting your duty to God, or the ill performance of his worſhip, in public, in family, or in ſecret; by neglecting your duty to your

neighbour, to yourſelves, to your relations; or doing that which is wrong, by indulging, in any meaſure, the "luſt "of the fleſh, the luſt of the eye, or the pride of life." To conclude all, you will never have a more ſatisfying evidence, that your acts of worſhip, ordinary or more ſolemn, have been acceptable to God, than if they ſerve to clothe you with humility, and make you adopt and reliſh the words of Job in the text: "I have heard of thee by the "hearing of the ear; but now mine eye ſeeth thee. Where-"fore I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes."

MAN IN HIS NATURAL STATE.

SERMON 23.

REV. iii. 17.

Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

IN order to preach the Gospel with success, it is necessary that we should begin, by establishing the great and fundamental truths, on which all the rest are built, and to which they constantly refer. Nay, it is necessary, that we should often look back to these, and see that we be not off the foundation, or that it be not weakly, or imperfectly laid. Of this sort, I take the guilt, misery and weakness of our nature to be; and therefore have chosen the words now read, as the subject of discourse, in which the spirit of God reproves the self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness of the church of Laodicea.

Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, &c. I suppose you will all easily understand, that the words are figurative, and are spoken entirely with a view to the spiritual state of that church. In this light, let us consider what is precisely their meaning.

We may either suppose, that this charge is brought against the church of Laodicea, because there were many there, under the profession of the Gospel, who were, notwithstanding, still in a natural and unrenewed state—

ſtrangers to the power of religion; of which, their being thus unhumbled, and inſenſible of their guilt and miſery, was the evidence; and for which the remedy is preſcribed in the following words: "I counſel thee to buy of me "gold tried in the fire, that thou mayeſt be rich, and white "raiment that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame "of thy nakedneſs do not appear; and anoint thine eyes "with eye ſalve, that thou mayeſt ſee."

Or we may ſuppoſe, that this reproof was in a great meaſure applicable to them all, in general; believers and unbelievers; the beſt of them being exceedingly prone to truſt in themſelves that they were righteous; inſtead of that humble dependance on the merit and grace of their Redeemer, which ought not only to be the refuge of the ſinner, but the confidence of the ſaint. And there is no queſtion, that this is a proper caution to profeſſing Chriſtians in every age, to beware of ſplitting on the rock of ſelf-ſufficiency.

But as this diſpoſition reigns in the heart of every one, that is yet at a diſtance from God—is the foundation of their ſecurity and impenitence, and is what they muſt be brought off from, before they can be reconciled to God; it is for their benefit, that I chiefly deſign this diſcourſe, though it may alſo be uſeful, and ſhall be in part, applied to the children of God. It is an affecting thought, when purſued to its conſequences; yet alas! it is unqueſtionably true, that in every aſſembly, ſuch as this, of profeſſing Chriſtians, there are not a few, who are in *the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*, under the wrath of God, and liable to the condemning ſentence of his law; and at the ſame time, that the far greateſt part of them are ignorant of it, and know not, that they are *wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

In diſcourſing farther upon this ſubject, therefore I ſhall

I. Endeavor to prove and illuſtrate this truth: that all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God.

II. I shall briefly shew you, that being brought to a lively sense, and genuine conviction of this, is the first, and a necessary step, to the saving knowledge of God, in Christ—And in the *last place*, shall make some practical improvement of the subject.

I. In the first place then, I am to prove and illustrate this truth; that all mankind are by nature in a state of sin and misery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God. What is said in this passage of the Laodiceans, is universally true, of the posterity of Adam. Unless an inward and essential change has been wrought upon them by the grace of God, they are *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* It is also true of them, as well as the Laodiceans, that they know it not; but vainly presume themselves to be rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing. If these two things are jointly true of many of you my hearers, there is nothing in which you can have so great a concern: therefore, let me earnestly beseech your most serious attention, to what shall be said: as the success of this conviction is necessary, to your understanding or profitting by any other part of divine truth, as I shall afterwards shew you.

The proof of the truth here asserted, can be only of two kinds. 1. From scripture which is the testimony of God declaring it. 2. From the visible state of the world, and our own experience finding it to be so.

1. That all mankind are by nature in a state of sin and misery, appears from the express, and repeated testimony of the word of God. And this testimony we have, not only in particular passages, carrying the truth, but in the strain and spirit of the whole, and the several dispensations of Divine Providence there recorded, which are all of them, built upon this supposition, and intended to remedy this universal evil.

See what God declares: Gen. vi. 5. "And God saw "that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was "only evil continually." And again, "the imagination

" of man's heart is evil from his youth." We may take the pſalmiſt David's teſtimony of himſelf, as a ſample of the reſt of mankind; and indeed he plainly intimates, that it is a common calamity. " Who can underſtand his " errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults. Behold! " I was ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin did my mother con- " ceive me."

We may take alſo the teſtimony of the apoſtle Paul, in his epiſtle to the Romans, which is the more full to our preſent purpoſe, that as he had never been at Rome, he is there laying the foundation of religion in general, and the Chriſtian diſpenſation in particular, by a clear and explicit proof of the need the world had of a Saviour, from its univerſal corruption and depravity. See then what he ſays—" What then? Are we better than they? " No, in no wiſe, for we have before proved both Jews and " Gentiles, that they are all under ſin. As it is written, " there is none righteous, no not one." And again— " Now we know that what things ſoever the law ſaith, it " ſaith to them who are under the law, that every mouth " may be ſtopped, and all the world may become guilty " before God.—For all have ſinned and come ſhort of the " glory of God."

You may alſo ſee that the apoſtle traces this diſorder to its very ſource—" Wherefore as by one man ſin entered " into the world, and death by ſin: and ſo death paſſed " upon all men, for that all have ſinned."

I ſhall add but one expreſs ſcripture teſtimony more.— " And you hath he quickened, who were dead in treſpaſſes " and ſins."

But beſides the particular paſſages of ſcripture, poſitively declaring this truth, the whole frame and contexture of the ſcriptures, and all the diſpenſations of Divine Providence recorded in them, are a proof of the ſame thing. Man is every where conſidered as in a fallen and ſinful ſtate. Every thing that is preſcribed to him, and every thing that is done for him, goes upon that ſuppoſition. It is not one man, or a few men, that are in ſcripture called to repentance, but all without exception. Now repentance is only the duty of a ſinner. An innocent

perſon cannot repent; he has nothing to grieve for in his heart, or to forſake in his life. It is alſo proper to obſerve, that one of the ſcripture characters of God is, *Merciful and gracious, ſlow to anger, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin.* Now, he could not be to us a forgiving God, and there would be no need that he ſhould be revealed under that character, unleſs we were ſinners, that ſtood in need of pardon. Mercy, indeed, is the diſtinguiſhing attribute of God, and this can only have reſpect to offenders. All the other perfections of God, might be exerciſed towards pure and holy creatures; but mercy, only towards ſinners. He might be a good, holy, juſt, wiſe, powerful God, to perſons in a ſtate of innocence, but he can ſhew mercy only to the guilty.

Do not the diſpenſations of God's providence ſhew the ſame thing? He ſent the flood, as a teſtimony of the wickedneſs of the world, and for the puniſhment of a guilty race. Remember alſo the ſacrifices, which were appointed, and accepted by God, from the beginning of the world. Sacrifices are for atonement, and expiation. They are plainly a ſubſtitution in the room of a forfeited life. It is doing violence to common ſenſe, to make them any thing elſe. The whole Jewiſh economy, which had in it ſo many ſacrifices, ſo many offerings, ſo many waſhings and purifications, does plainly ſuppoſe, the perſon uſing them to be infected with ſin, or moral pollution. Had not this been the caſe, they had been extremely abſurd and improper.

But the ſtrongeſt teſtimony of all, that God hath given to the guilt and corruption of mankind, is his ſending his own Son into the world, to redeem them, by the ſacrifice of himſelf—To what purpoſe redeem them, if they were not in bondage? Why ſo coſtly an expiation, if our lives had not been forfeited to divine juſtice? But that it was for this purpoſe, that Chriſt came into the world, is ſo plain, from the whole of the ſcriptures, that I ſhall ſelect but one paſſage out of many, to prove it—"Whom God "hath ſet forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his "blood, to declare his righteouſneſs, for the remiſſion of "ſins that are paſt, through the forbearance of God."

What is ſaid already on this head, is a full proof from ſcripture, that man is now, by nature, in a ſtate of ſin; that he is alſo, in conſequence of that, in a ſtate of miſery, and liable to the wrath of God, is proved by many of the ſame paſſages, and by many others—"For the wrath of "God is revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs, "and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in un- "righteouſneſs—For the wages of ſin is death," &c. But I need not multiply paſſages to this purpoſe; for in all God's diſpenſations, the deſerved puniſhment of ſinners is as evident as their ſinfulneſs itſelf. It is indeed fully proved, from the eſſential perfections of God, particularly his holineſs and juſtice. He is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity. *Evil cannot dwell with him, nor fools*, that is, ſinners, *ſtand in his ſight.*

Is not all this then my brethren, a ſufficient proof, from the teſtimony of God, that man in a natural ſtate, is ſinful and miſerable? ſhall we affirm ourſelves to be whole, if he ſaith we are unſound? Do we know more than God? Will we not give credit to the fountain of truth? Nor is it any objection to this, that we ourſelves know it not, or are but little ſenſible of it. One conſiderable part of the diſeaſe, is blindneſs of underſtanding: ſo that we may, and muſt, till our eyes are opened, be ignorant of our danger —We may think and ſay, that we are rich, and increaſed in goods, and have need of nothing, while we are *wretched and miſerable, and blind and naked.*

2. The ſame thing appears from the viſible ſtate of the world, and our own experience. Unbelievers are apt to hear with indifference and neglect, what they are told from ſcripture teſtimony, unleſs otherwiſe confirmed to them; and it is with the unbeliever we have now to do. Beſides, the eſtabliſhment of this truth, upon other evidence than that of ſcripture, ought to have a powerful influence, in inducing men to believe the other truths in ſcripture, that are connected with and founded upon it. I think it therefore, highly proper, to lay before you what evidence we have of our loſt ſtate, from the obſervation of the world, though the ſcriptures had been ſilent. I would likewiſe recommend to all, what ſhall be ſaid on this ſub-

ject, to preſerve your faith unſhaken, and keep you from blaſphemous, unbelieving thoughts, if at any time you ſhould be tempted to them: ſince even unenlightened reaſon confirms the foundation of divine truth, and nature, and providence conſpire in preaching the doctrine of divine grace.

Now, doth not our experience, as well as the obſervation of others, ſhew us, that we are born in ſin, and conceived in iniquity? May we not ſay from our own knowledge, that the imaginations of the heart of man, are only evil from his youth, and that continually? Is there not a proneneſs, and tendency to evil, univerſally to be obſerved in mankind? and a backwardneſs and averſion to that which is good? Is not this apparent even in children, upon the firſt dawn of reaſon in their minds, and the firſt ſight of choice or inclination in their hearts? Surely it muſt be owned, that in that early period, they are at leaſt *comparatively* innocent—If any among us, is without ſin, it muſt be the youngeſt; *yet folly is bound in the heart of a child.* How hard is it to guard them from evil, and to inſpire them with good diſpoſitions, even by the wiſeſt and earlieſt care, in their inſtruction? and even after the moſt ſucceſsful pains, are there not ſtill many remaining blemiſhes, through the prevalence of corrupt nature, which ſhew, that the ground-work itſelf, was faulty? But on the contrary, how eaſily do men learn that which is evil? Do they need to be taught? Is it not enough to give them licence? How juſt is that deſcription in Jeremiah? *They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.* I am far from denying, that men are improved and forwarded in ſin, by inſtruction and example, as well as in that which is good: but it is plain, they are far apter ſcholars, in the firſt, than in the laſt; which plainly ſhews they are more powerfully diſpoſed to it by nature. Nay, is it not evident, from the univerſal experience and teſtimony of thoſe, who act from a principle of Religion; that it is extremely difficult, with all the care they can take, to reſiſt the propenſity of nature to the contrary? And that in the beſt, it often gets the ſuperiority, when they are off their guard? Is not this an evidence of the depravity and cor-

ruption of human nature, and its tendency to evil? Are thoſe who hate ſin, often overcome by it, and ſhall thoſe who love it, preſume to ſay, they are free from it?

If any ſhould aſk, how I prove that that courſe of action to which human nature is inclined is evil, without the aſſiſtance of ſcripture? I anſwer, from reaſon; and that many ways—from its pernicious effects on ſocieties, and private perſons; from the teſtimony of the world in general, when others than themſelves are concerned, and from the teſtimony of every man's conſcience in his own caſe. Who is there, that does not often feel in himſelf, a powerful tendency to what he cannot but in his heart condemn? Is not his conſcience God's vicegerent? and doth not natural religion, as well as the religion of Chriſt, declare him corrupt? So that I may ſay with the Apoſtle Paul, not citing the paſſage as a proof, but as an illuſtration and deſcription of the character, and ſtate of natural men, "For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do "by nature the things contained in the law; theſe having "not the law, are a law unto themſelves, which ſhew the "work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience "alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts, the mean while, "accuſing or elſe excuſing one another."

Thus there is as much light remaining with us ſince the fall, as to ſhew, that we are out of the way, but not to bring us back to it again.

As a ſerious conſideration of the ſtate of the wicked may ſhew us our natural impurity, ſo it hath been long ago diſcovered, and confeſſed by many of the ancient heathens, who never heard of the name of Chriſt, nor knew of the remedy. Theſe, diſcerning by nature, the perfectly pure and holy nature of God, and comparing it with the diſpoſitions prevalent in man, could not reconcile them together; but concluded, that a creature ſo corrupt, could not come in that condition out of the hands of its Creator. This difficulty ſome of them endeavored to ſolve by a ſtate of pre-exiſtence; which bears ſome reſemblance to the true ſolution, given of it in the holy ſcripture: viz. the apoſtacy of our firſt parents; which entailed a corrupted nature upon their poſterity, in which the light of nature and revealed truth, ſeem almoſt wholly to coincide.

It is to the ſame thing that I cannot help attributing the practice, that ſo univerſally prevailed over the heathen world, before the coming of Chriſt, *of offering ſacrifices*, to appeaſe the wrath of the deity, ſuppoſed to be offended. That the cuſtom of ſacrificing prevailed very generally, perhaps univerſally among the heathen nations, at the greateſt diſtance from, and having no correſpondence with each other, is a certain and unqueſtionable fact. Neither do I ſee to what cauſe we can aſcribe it, unleſs to one of theſe two; either an ancient tradition, from the beginning of the world, and ſpread with the inhabitants through the ſeveral parts of it, as they ſeparated and peopled it; or to the common condition of human nature, which dictated the ſame thing to perſons in ſuch diſtant places.

If the firſt of theſe ſuppoſitions is embraced, which indeed I ſuppoſe to be the truth, it appears that ſacrifices were appointed by God to man in his fallen ſtate, for the pardon of ſin, and that they had reference to the great propitiatory ſacrifice of Chriſt upon the croſs.

If we prefer the laſt ſuppoſition, it would ſeem as if the conſciouſneſs of guilt had uniformly prompted men in all ages and nations, to offer up ſome atonement for their offences. In both caſes, it equally ſerves to prove the corruption and ſinfulneſs of human nature.

Now, as what hath been ſaid, plainly proves the impurity of man in his natural ſtate, ſo his miſery and liableneſs to puniſhment may alſo be proved; both as a natural conſequence of his ſinfulneſs, and even more plainly by itſelf. There is not only a conſiderable degree of actual miſery in the world, but plain preſages of more to follow it in the world to come. Need I take up much time, in enumerating the ſeveral miſeries and calamities incident to human life? Are not oppreſſion and injury from one another, poverty, ſickneſs, pain and death, the plain fruits of ſin, and viſible tokens of God's diſpleaſure? Man with ſome marks of ſuperiority and excellence of nature, is even, by means of his ſuperiority, his knowledge, and foreſight of his own ſufferings, more miſerable, than any other of the creatures, that is equally ſubject to the ſtroke of death.

To the whole, I ſhall only ſubjoin one conſideration more, which is applicable to both parts of the argument—I have often thought, that the *natural terror and fear, with which men are poſſeſt of the preſence of God, or any remarkable token of his power, is nothing elſe but an indication of guilt, or an apprehenſion of wrath.*

You may ſee ſome incidents in ſcripture, from which it is natural to conclude, that when God makes any viſible manifeſtation of his glory, or ſends any of his angels or miniſters from heaven to earth; thoſe who are preſent, are filled with the utmoſt dread and terror.

Thus in the relation given of God's appearance upon Mount Sinai, it is ſaid; "And ſo terrible was the ſight, "that Moſes ſaid, I exceedingly fear and quake." See another example, in Iſaiah—"Then ſaid I, woe is me, "for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips; "for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of Hoſts." And in the New Teſtament, in the apoſtle John—"And "when I ſaw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

And is not this always the caſe, in all ages, that upon any remarkable appearance of an inhabitant of the other world, or even when any ſuch thing is falſely apprehended, the inhabitants of this world are filled with extraordinary terror? What is this do you imagine, but conſciouſneſs of guilt, and apprehenſion of vengeance?

Innocence has no enemy, and it has nothing to fear. We are all in much the ſame caſe with Adam, immediately after his firſt tranſgreſſion; when he heard God's voice in the garden, *he was afraid, and fled, and hid himſelf*—We read of no ſuch fear poſſeſſing him, while he retained his innocence, but as ſoon as he had ſinned, he began to dread an avenging God.

From all this then, I would conclude, that reaſon accords with ſcripture, in ſaying, that *all have ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God:* that man in a natural ſtate, is *wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

AN INDUCEMENT TO COME TO CHRIST.

SERMON 24.

REV. iii. 17.

Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

HAVING in a former diſcourſe, proved, and illuſtrated this truth; that all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of ſin and miſery, under the bondage of corruption, and liable to the wrath of God:—I proceed now to the *ſecond thing* propoſed, which was to ſhew you, that being brought to a lively ſenſe and genuine conviction of this, is the firſt, and a neceſſary ſtep to the ſaving knowledge of God in Chriſt.

On this, I ſhall not need to ſpend much time, as it is ſo exceedingly plain, both in itſelf, and from what hath been already ſaid—It is however neceſſary to ſet it clearly before you, in order to lay a foundation for the improvement of the ſubject.

If the doctrine of Chriſt, and of him crucified, proceeds upon the ſuppoſition of our ſinful and miſerable condition by nature; then ſurely, it can neither be valued, embraced, nor improved; and indeed, I think hardly underſtood, by thoſe who know not this their natural ſtate.

What Chriſt hath done, and promiſes to do in our behalf, is deſigned as a remedy for our diſtreſſed condition; and therefore, till the diſtreſs is known, the remedy will be ſet at nought. If a phyſician ſhould offer his care and ſkill for the recovery of a man, who eſteemed himſelf in perfect health, would he not deride the propoſal, ſo long as he continued in that opinion? If any man ſhould offer a charitable ſupply of clothes and food, to one who imagined himſelf immenſely rich, and gloried in his riches; would he not look upon it as the groſſeſt inſult?

Juſt ſo is the goſpel treated, by all ſuch as ſee not their miſery. What is the ſubſtance of the goſpel? 'To you 'O men, I call, and my voice is to the ſons of men. 'Behold! I preach to you Chriſt crucified, a Saviour 'ſuited to your neceſſities, able to ſave to the uttermoſt 'all that come to God through him. He is well fitted to 'be a mediator, between you and your offended Maker. 'He hath offered himſelf up, a ſacrifice to the juſtice of 'God for your ſins, by the merit of which, you may be 'ſaved from deſerved and impending ruin. He offers 'himſelf as a guide, to direct your feet in the way of peace '—to ſtand by you in the difficulties and dangers to 'which you are expoſed, and to give you by his com-'municated ſtrength, a complete victory over all your 'enemies.'

What reply doth the unconvinced ſinner make to all this? Why he ſaith, 'I know nothing of this miſery you 'ſuppoſe, wherefore then a Saviour? I ſee no ſin, what 'neceſſity then, for an atonement? I fear no wrath, 'therefore will ſeek for no Interceſſor. My eyes are open, 'therefore I will have no guide. I know of no enemies, 'and therefore, will not enter into contention with a ſha-'dow, or flee when no man purſueth.'

Theſe, my brethren, are either directly, or implicitly, the thoughts of men, in a ſecure and unconvinced ſtate; and while they are ſo, they can ſee no form nor comelineſs in the Saviour, nor any beauty, that they ſhould deſire him.

It is otherwiſe with the broken in ſpirit. He ſees his own vileneſs and unworthineſs, and therefore cannot

lift his eyes to God, but through the atoning blood of Chriſt. He fears the *avenger of blood*, and therefore flees to the *city of refuge*—The meſſage of the goſpel is to him indeed glad tidings of great joy, and he counts it a faithful ſaying and *worthy of all acceptation.*

The juſtice of this repreſentation you may ſee, from what our Saviour himſelf ſays of the end of his coming. "They that be whole need not a phyſician, but they that "are ſick: But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will "have mercy and not ſacrifice; for I am not come to call "the righteous, but ſinners to repentance."

See alſo the terms of his invitation. "Come unto me "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give "you reſt."

Appetite, and knowledge of neceſſity, is firſt required, or ſuppoſed, to the beſtowing of Goſpel bleſſings—"Ho! "every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters."

I ſhall only add, that we find by the inſtances recorded in ſcripture, of ſuch as were converted by the preaching of the goſpel; that their converſion took its riſe from conviction of ſin—"Now when they heard this, they were "pricked in their hearts, and ſaid unto Peter, and to the "reſt of the apoſtles, men and brethren, what ſhall we "do?" See alſo the inſtance of the jailor—"Then he "called for a light, and ſprang in, and came trembling, "and fell down before Paul and Silas: And brought them "out, and ſaid ſirs, what muſt I do to be ſaved?"

Repentance unto life, and the return of the ſinner to God, proceeds from the ſame cauſe, in every age. Who are the perſons who believingly apply to Chriſt for the pardon of their ſins, but thoſe who ſee they are undone without him? Who are the perſons in whoſe eyes he is moſt precious, and who maintain the moſt habitual dependance upon him? Are they not thoſe who have been moſt effectually humbled, and ſee their own inſufficiency for any thing that is good?

From all this I conclude, that none can come to Chriſt by faith, but thoſe who ſee themſelves to be *wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.*

Let us now make ſome improvement, of what hath been ſaid upon this ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

1. I would improve what has been ſaid on this ſubject, for diſcovering the danger of many among us, who have never yet been brought to a juſt ſenſe of their character and ſtate. Even the general belief, that ſuch often have in the ſcriptures, may ſhew them what they have to fear. I might no doubt firſt of all obſerve, how very guilty and miſerable thoſe are, who are moſt notorious for ſins, of the groſſeſt and moſt ſhameful kind. But my ſubject leads me more directly to conſider, who are in general, *unrenewed*, than to mark the ſeveral degrees of guilt in particular ſinners. From the text therefore, and the illuſtration of it, I am authorized to declare to you, and *I beſeech you to hear it with application;* that all ſuch as were never brought to a real diſcovery, and inward ſenſe of their miſerable condition by nature, are ſtill in a ſtate of wrath, and ſtrangers to the power of religion, whatever may be their profeſſion, and whatever may be their preſent peace. Oh! how eaſy is it, to lay aſleep a natural conſcience, and to keep a deceitful corrupt heart in a ſtate of eaſe and ſecurity? Some formality in outward duty, ſome moderation in ſin, ſo to ſpeak, the natural decay and weakneſs of human paſſions, or youthful luſts, in a character formed by human prudence, and regulated by health, credit or gain, is often made to ſupply the place of a heart renewed by the ſpirit and grace of God. But conſider, I beſeech you, that though ſome may be ten-fold more the children of the devil than others, yet all by nature, are the ſervants of ſin; and "except a man "be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God."—It is not only ſuch as are profane, or unclean; ſuch as riot in brutiſh ſenſuality; ſuch as are the plagues of human ſociety; who live in brawls and contention; but all, in whom an eſſential change has never been wrought, that are thus *concluded* under condemnation.

It is uſual for men to take encouragement, from ſeeing others worſe than themſelves; and to conſider all the threatenings in ſcripture, as levelled againſt the chief and

capital offenders; but my text is chiefly directed to such as say they are "rich, and increased with goods." Can you say then, my brethren, that you have been brought under genuine convictions of sin? Have you been obliged to fall down prostrate before God, when sitting upon the throne of his holiness? Have you found the sentence of death in yourselves, and discovered no remedy but in Christ? If this has never been your case, you have reason to fear, that you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, and in "the bond of iniquity."

But I must tell you also, that this is matter of feeling more than of profession. It is not enough to speak honorably of Christ, or of his works. Many do so, who never felt their necessity, or seriously and in good earnest applied to him. It were a happy thing, if all among our hearers, who call for evangelical preaching, who quarrel with us when they think we do not preach the Saviour's cross—the lost state of man, and the doctrine of free grace, were experimentally acquainted with these truths. Many such have only been accustomed to hear the Redeemer spoken of with reverence. They may be able to imitate the language of some of his servants, though they know very little of that brokenness of spirit, which accompanies true repentance.

But lest this should be in any measure mistaken, I must make these two observations—the *first* is, that a lively sense and deep conviction of sin, is, properly speaking, but a negative mark of true religion; giving us to know, that the unhumbled are yet impenitent. For it is certain, that many have been under very strong convictions, nay, have been driven to the very borders of despair with terror, who yet never were effectually changed, but stifled their convictions, and returned to their former security of heart, and carelessness of life.

Secondly, there may be some on the other hand, who are truly *born of God*, in whom the terrors of conviction have not been very remarkable. This happens most frequently in the case of those, who are called in their infancy, or earlier years, and who have had the advantage of a careful, and pious education. It would be destructive of

the comforts of God's children to lay down *one method*, in which he always proceeds. He is free and sovereign, in the manner of his dealing with sinners; and softens some hearts by kindness, as well as others by correction. So that if the end be brought about, we need be less solicitous about the steps of his procedure. Yet I think humility of spirit is inseparable from real religion; and if it be less visible in the anguish of repentance, it will be still manifest in the temper of the penitent.

II. Let me now, for the improvement of this subject, lay down a few of the best and most solid evidences of genuine conviction of sin. And,

1. It is a good sign that conviction is genuine, when there is a clear and deep apprehension of the *evil* of sin, as well as the *danger* of it. When the mind dwells not only on the atrocity of particular crimes, but on the aggravation of all sin, as such: When the sinner is truly offended with himself, for departing from his Maker's service; breaking his holy laws; forgetting or despising his innumerable mercies. There may be, and there is often an apprehension of suffering when there is little sense of the evil of sin: but the conviction is then genuine, when it makes the sinner not only remember what he has done, *but confess what he has deserved.*

2. It is a good evidence, when the sense of the evil of sin abides and grows, even though the fear of wrath may in a great measure have abated.

It is observable, that conviction of sin usually takes its rise from some gross or heinous acts, which first alarm the conscience, and in such a situation the attention of the penitent is fixed on nothing else but the enormities of his life. If this view continues, and produces its effects, he is soon brought to see and confess the inherent vanity of his heart; the worldliness of his affections; and the unprofitableness of his conversation. It is a very common thing for persons who seem to have some sense of the commission of crimes, to have little or no sense at all of the neglect of duty, and of living daily to themselves. It was a heavy charge, however, brought by the prophet

againſt Belſhazzar: "And the God in whoſe hand thy "breath is, and whoſe are all thy ways, haſt thou not glo- "rified." Wherever there is true repentance, though there may be the greateſt peace of mind, there will be alſo a deep and growing ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and the obligation of being habitually devoted to God.

3. It is a good evidence, when there is a continued and growing eſteem of the neceſſity and value of the mediation of Chriſt. It was to ſave ſinners that he came. A ſenſe of ſin is neceſſary to our receiving him; and in proportion to its ſtrength will certainly be our attachment to him. This indeed, is the great and vital principle of the ſpiritual life—"I am crucified with Chriſt, neverthe- "leſs I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me: and the "life which I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of "the Son of God; who loved me, and gave himſelf to "die for me."

4. The beſt and ſureſt mark of real conviction of ſin, is, if it leaves you poſſeſſed of a deep hatred and abhorrence of it, and a daily ſolicitude to fly from it. Some may counterfeit a ſenſe of the evil of ſin to their own hearts; may have a real fear of its bitter conſequences; and even a preſumptuous reliance on Chriſt for pardon; and yet may, in ſome inſtances, adhere to the practice of it.

Floods of tears from ſuch a perſon, avail nothing: but he hath certainly truly ſorrowed for ſin, who in his practice forſakes it; that is to ſay, he is not willingly ſubject to any known ſin—but ſays with Elihu, "That which I "ſee not teach thou me: If I have done iniquity, I will "do no more."

III. Let me beſeech all ſerious perſons, to improve this ſubject for the trial of their ſtate. Examine, by the principles above laid down, the reality, and the progreſs of religion in your ſouls. Have you a growing ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and of your own unworthineſs?—This is at once an evidence, and a mean of growth in grace. He that thinks leaſt of himſelf is higheſt in God's account; and the more a believer increaſes in holineſs and real worth, the

more he increaſes in humility. As it is an evidence, it is alſo a mean, of further improvement; for he that hath the deepeſt ſenſe of his unworthineſs and weakneſs, will certainly live moſt by faith on the merit and grace of his Redeemer.

Therefore, Chriſtians, try yourſelves by this important ſign. Whether do you, by religious duties, build yourſelves up on ſelf-righteouſneſs, or do you only learn by them, how far you fall ſhort of what is incumbent on you? What innumerable evils compaſs you about? and therefore how much you have need of mercy inſtead of reward? Do you look upon the works of righteouſneſs which you have done, as ſomething, by which you *merit* at the hand of God; or do you look upon them, as the *evidence* of his own work in you, and for you, and give him the glory, to whom it is due?

IV. I ſhall now conclude the whole, with a few directions for producing and preſerving this profitable ſenſe and conviction of ſin. And,

1. Let me beg of every hearer, the ſerious conſideration of himſelf and his ways. Many have no ſenſe of their ſinfulneſs, becauſe they have no knowledge of themſelves at all; but go through the world in uninterrupted thoughtleſſneſs and unconcern. Is there any thing of greater moment than the ſtate of your minds, and your hope towards God? Inattention is perhaps a more univerſal cauſe of impiety, than high handed and obſtinate profanity. Would you but ſeriouſly conſider your ways, and lay to heart the things that belong to your peace, I would count it a hopeful circumſtance; and expect, you would ſpeedily ſee your danger, and God in his mercy would lead you to the cure.

2. Give yourſelves much to reading, and hearing the word of God. The entrance of his word giveth light.—It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and correction: but it is particularly neceſſary for *conviction;* for by the law is the knowledge of ſin. What wonder, if thoſe who never open a bible, and ſeldom enter into the houſe of God, ſhould be ignorant of their guilt and miſery? The

word of God ſhews his right in you, pleads his cauſe, and challenges your apoſtaſy. It is exceedingly rare that thoſe who have fairly turned their backs upon God's inſtituted worſhip, are diſturbed in their ſecurity; but are ſuffered to ſleep on till they ſleep the ſleep of death. But it frequently happens, that thoſe who attend ordinances, even from no higher principle than curioſity, cuſtom, or form, find that the word of God is *a fire and hammer*, that breaketh the rock in pieces: "that it is quick and powerful, "ſharper than any two edged ſword, piercing, even to "the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and joints and "marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents "of the heart."

3. In the laſt place. Let me beſeech you, often to ſeat yourſelves in the immediate preſence of God, or rather, frequently to recollect, that you can no where go from his ſpirit, or fly from his preſence. There is, if I may ſpeak ſo, a light and glory in the preſence of God, that diſcerns, and diſcloſes the works of darkneſs. We may often excuſe, or palliate our conduct to men, and even hide its deformity from our own view, when we could not juſtify it to ourſelves, if we reflected, that "it is open and manifeſt, "in the ſight of God."—If therefore there is any thing in your practice, which you are inclined to palliate, and apt to excuſe—ſuppoſe you were ſtanding at the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, where all of us ſhall ſhortly be; and think, whether your excuſes will then ſtand the teſt of his impartial ſearch.

"If our hearts condemn us not, God is greater than our "hearts, and knoweth all things." It is therefore the duty and intereſt of every ſinner, to take ſhame and confuſion of face to himſelf, and apply to the "blood of "ſprinkling, which ſpeaketh better things, than the blood "of Abel."

TRUST IN GOD.

SERMON 25.

ISAIAH l. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

IT is said of every real believer, that he walks by faith and not by sight. If this is true it will follow, that his faith must be exposed to a variety of trials, while he continues in a world of sense. These trials arise from the state of his own mind—from his outward condition—from the state of the world with which he stands connected—and from the mutual influence of all these, one upon another. From this situation it is easy to see, that there are few duties, for the exercise of which a good man will have greater or more frequent occasion than that of trust and reliance upon God. Trust is the duty and the refuge of the needy—of the dependant—of the weak—of the timorous, and the distressed. How many are included under one or more of these characters; or rather, who is it that can say he is altogether excluded?

Agreeably to this, we need but open the sacred volume, to perceive how frequent the exhortations are to trust in God, and how many views are given us of his power,

wiſdom, mercy and faithfulneſs, to encourage us to an unſhaken reliance. At the ſame time, I am ſorry to ſay, that there are few duties which are more imperfectly underſtood by many profeſſing Chriſtians. Even pious perſons often ſin both on the right hand and on the left, that is to ſay, both by diffidence and preſumption. I have, therefore, laid hold of this opportunity, and made choice of this paſſage of ſcripture, in order to open and illuſtrate a little this important duty of a ſervant of God. How ſeaſonable it is you will eaſily perceive, for in the ſacrament of the Lord's Supper we have ſet before us Chriſt Jeſus the unſpeakable gift of God—the great pledge of his love, and the great foundation of our reliance upon him, not only for his ſaving mercy in general, but for every neceſſary bleſſing in our way to eternal reſt.

This paſſage of ſcripture is alſo well ſuited to the ſubject. It was ſpoken to the Jews in a lax and diſſolute age, when many had turned their backs upon the ſervice of God—had deſerted his ordinances and deſpiſed his ſervants, which is always an occaſion both of affliction and temptation to his own children. This appears from the firſt words of the chapter. "For thus ſaith the Lord, "where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I "have put away? And which of my creditors is it to "whom I have ſold you? Behold, for your iniquities "you have ſold yourſelves, and for your tranſgreſſions is "your mother put away." As alſo from the 3d and 4th verſes. "I clothe the heavens with blackneſs, and I make "ſackcloth their covering. The Lord God hath given "me the tongue of the learned, that I ſhould know how "to ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that is weary."

In diſcourſing further on this ſubject, it is propoſed, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

I. To open a little the character and ſtate of thoſe who are called upon and exhorted to truſt in the name of the Lord.

II. To explain the duty of truſt, and point out the foundation of it.

III. To apply the ſubject for your inſtruction and comfort.

In the Firſt place then, I am to open a little the character and ſtate of thoſe who are here called upon and exhorted to truſt in the name of the Lord.

Their deſcription is as follows: "Who is among you "that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his ſer- "vant, that walketh in darkneſs, and hath no light? let "him truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay himſelf "upon his God." It will help us to enter into the ſpirit and meaning of the prophet's words, if we keep in view the ſtate of the Jewiſh church, hinted at a little while ago. "Who is among you;" that is, if there is one or more—if there is a ſmall ſelect number in the midſt of general corruption and depravity, who have kept their garments unpolluted, though iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold. "That feareth the Lord?" You know it is common in ſcripture to deſcribe religion in general by ſome particular leading branch of it. The fear of God is often made uſe of for this purpoſe, as in that paſſage, there ſhall be no want to them that *fear him.* It may, therefore, ſignify thoſe who have a ſincere and unfeigned regard to the commandments of God, and have choſen him as their portion and hope. Thoſe who deſire and deſerve to be diſtinguiſhed from the profane deſpiſer—the ſecure formaliſt, or the diſguiſed hypocrite. Thoſe, in a word, who are, and who deſire to appear to uſe the ſtrong language of ſcripture upon the Lord's ſide in every ſtruggle, and who reſolve with Joſhua, that whatever others do, for their part they will ſerve the Lord.

But I cannot help thinking, we may alſo, with great ſafety, explain the words in a cloſer and ſtricter ſenſe, and ſuppoſe, that by fearing the Lord is to be underſtood a due reverence for his infinite majeſty, a humble veneration for his ſacred authority. This is a moſt excellent fence or guard to the conſcience in an evil time, and a noble preſervative from the ſpreading infection and inſinuating poiſon of prevailing or faſhionable ſins. It is alſo the uſual character of a diſſolute age to have caſt off fear, to treat the moſt ſacred things with ſcorn, and to look upon that

holy ſolicitude to avoid ſin, which appears in the carriage and language of a child of God, as a mark of meanneſs or weakneſs of mind. In ſuch an age, one who fears God is well deſcribed by the prophet Iſaiah. "But to "this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a "contrite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word."

The next part of the character is, "and obeyeth the "voice of his ſervant;" that is to ſay, is willing to hearken to the meſſage of God, by the mouth of his ſervants. The words of the text, no doubt, may be conſidered as primarily referring to the inſpired prophets, who bore an immediate commiſſion, miraculouſly atteſted, from God. Many, even of theſe, were ſet at nought, their meſſage derided, and their perſons inſulted, when they attempted to ſtem the tide of prevailing vice, or boldly denounced the divine vengeance againſt high-handed ſinners. But the ſincerely pious obeyed their voice. I ſhall make no ſcruple to apply this to ourſelves, and the preſent age. Our bleſſed Redeemer hath eſtabliſhed in his church a ſtanding miniſtry, and the regular adminiſtration of ordinances. And though we have this treaſure in earthen veſſels, yet in no other way doth he now communicate his will, and vouchſafe his preſence to his people, but by the reading and hearing of his word, and attendance upon his inſtituted worſhip. It will, no doubt, therefore, be a part of the character of a good man, that he will love the ordinances, and obey the voice of the ſervants of God, that he will conſider him who hath ſent them, and receive inſtruction, not as the word of man, but as it is in deed and in truth, the word of God.

On the other hand, when iniquity prevails, when irreligion and profaneneſs lift up their heads, one of the moſt uſual concomitants, and one of the ſureſt proofs of it, is a neglect of ordinances, and contempt of thoſe who are concerned in their adminiſtration: how far this is at preſent the caſe, I leave to yourſelves to judge. While I ſpeak this, my brethren, I do by no means deſire to ſee an ignorant people diſtracted by the gloomy terrors of ſuperſtition, or led blindfold by the enchanted cord of implicit faith. But ſure I am, there is an extreme on either hand,

and thoſe who truly fear the Lord, will honor the perſons, and obey the voice of ſuch as plead his cauſe and ſpeak in his name. You may reſt aſſured, that though they neither deſerve nor claim any authority on their own account, yet ſo long as they ſtand in the divine counſels, and ſpeak the divine word, their meſſage will be attended with this awful ſanction, "He that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me, and he "that deſpiſeth me deſpiſeth him that ſent me."

The laſt part of the character here drawn, which lays the foundation for the ſubſequent direction is, "that walketh "in darkneſs and hath no light." Darkneſs and light, beſides their literal, have often a metaphorical ſenſe in ſcripture. They are, indeed, uſed with a good deal of latitude and variety. But I think their metaphorical ſignification may be reduced to theſe two general heads.

1. Sometimes light ſignifies knowledge, and darkneſs ſignifies ignorance—as in Eph. v. 8. "Ye were ſometimes "darkneſs, but now are ye light in the Lord, walk as "children of light." Acts xxvi. 18. "To turn them "from darkneſs unto light, and from the power of Satan "unto God." Job xxxvii. 19. "Teach us what we ſhall "ſay unto him, for we cannot order our ſpeech by reaſon "of darkneſs."

2. Sometimes darkneſs ſignifies diſtreſs or trouble, and the correſpondent ſignification of light is deliverance and joy, as 2 Sam. xxii. 28, 29. "And the afflicted people "thou wilt ſave, but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that "thou mayeſt bring them down, for thou art my lamp, "O Lord, and the Lord will lighten my darkneſs." Job xix. 8. "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot paſs; "he hath put darkneſs in my paths." Pſalm xcvii. 11. "Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the "upright in heart." Eſther viii. 16. "And the Jews had "light, and gladneſs, and joy and honor."

None of theſe ſenſes is to be excluded in the paſſage before us. Believers may walk in darkneſs, when ignorant or uncertain as to what nearly concerns them, as well as under diſtreſs and trouble. They have alſo a mutual influence upon, produce, and are produced by, one another. For illuſtrating this a little more particularly, obſerve,

that a good man may walk in darkneſs. 1. When he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his intereſt in the divine favor. 2. When he is under the preſſure of outward calamity. 3. When the ſtate of the church is ſuch, that he cannot underſtand or explain, in a ſatisfying manner, the courſe of divine providence. Theſe particulars I have it not in view to enlarge much upon, but only to explain them ſo far as is neceſſa y to lay a foundation for what ſhall be afterwards offered on the duty to truſt in God.

1. Then, a good man may walk in darkneſs when he is in doubt or uncertainty as to his intereſt in the divine favor. I apprehend that ſome meaſure of hope in God's mercy is eſſential to true piety, and not only the right, but the poſſeſſion of every child of God. Faith and deſpair are beyond all queſtion inconſiſtent. Faith and hope are inſeparable. Yet certainly the excellent ones of the earth may be ſometimes involved in great perplexity and doubt. This is plain from ſcripture examples, from daily experience, and from the nature and reaſon of the thing. How violent a ſtruggle do we often find the Pſalmiſt David in, between hope and fear? "O my God, my ſoul is caſt "down in me; therefore will I remember thee from the "land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill "Mizar." How many do we ſee every day under a ſpirit of bondage, who, though they ſtill cleave to God as their portion, yet are often full of fears, and ſeldom dare confidently affirm their intereſt in, or relation to him. And indeed how can it be otherwiſe? While we are here, our ſanctification is but imperfect; and alas! with regard to many, it is often hard to determine, whether we ſhould not write upon it, *mene tekel*, as eſſentially defective.

Sin ſeparates between God and his people, and cauſes him to hide his face from them. Nay, ſometimes, though there be no particular or provoking crime, as the cauſe of his controverſy with them, he may withdraw from them the light of his countenance, to exerciſe their vigilance, or to try their patience. I know, my brethren, that the diſtreſs of ſerious ſouls, when mourning after an abſent or an angry God, crying to him in ſecret, and following hard after him in his ordinances, is by many treated with the

higheſt degree of contempt. But ſurely, if peace of mind from a well-founded hope of the divine favor, is the greateſt of all preſent bleſſings: and if this, from the variableneſs of our own conduct, is ſometimes more, ſometimes leſs ſtrong, and ſometimes wholly ſuſpended: when this laſt is the caſe, it muſt occaſion inexpreſſible concern, and there can be no greater evidence of irreligion and impiety, than to call it in queſtion.

2. A good man may walk in darkneſs when under the preſſure of outward calamity. This, in a real believer, is never wholly ſeparated from the former. Even in itſelf, indeed, no affliction for the preſent is joyous but grievous. The diſorders of this feeble frame, poverty and ſtraitneſs of proviſion, unjuſt ſlander and reproach, muſt be deeply and ſenſibly felt by every good man, even as he is a man. To this may be added, the loſs of relations, and concerns for the ſufferings of others of every kind, which is always moſt diſtreſſing to the beſt and tendereſt ſpirits. But outward calamities by thoſe that fear God, are felt moſt ſenſibly when they are conſidered as the rod of his anger, and bring ſin to remembrance.

When he viſits his own children with any of his ſore judgments; when he follows them with breach upon breach, they are ready to ſay, "Surely he is ſetting me "up as a mark for his arrows, he is counting me his ene-"my."—They are often at a loſs to underſtand the cauſe of his controverſy with them; and they alſo find it often extremely difficult to bring their minds to a patient and ſubmiſſive reſignation to his holy will. To thoſe who know their duty, and deſire through divine grace to comply with it, it is no ſmall difficulty to be obliged to ſtruggle with a riſing and rebellious heart within, as well as ſuffering from without, and to be alternately calling in queſtion, the certainty either of the love of God to them, or of their love to him.

3. A good man may ſometimes walk in darkneſs from the aſpect of Providence, and the ſtate of the Redeemer's kingdom. The works of God are fought out of them who have pleaſure in them. But when they are not able to penetrate the depths of the divine counſels, this becomes

often a source both of distress and temptation. When wicked men are suffered to prosper at their will—when the good are oppressed by the power and tyranny, or persecuted by the malice, of their enemies—when the most generous attempts for the revival of truth and righteousness are rendered abortive—when the professing servants of God are divided into parties, or marshalled under names, and their zeal made to spend itself in unnecessary, sinful and hurtful contentions—when offences come, and and those of the highest profession or attainments are suffered to fall into gross crimes, by which the mouths of enemies are opened to blaspheme; then may, and must we adopt the words of the Psalmist—Ps. lxxiii. 10—14. "Therefore, his people return hither; and waters of a "full cup are wrung out unto them: And they say, how "doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most "High? Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the "world; they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed "my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. "For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened "every morning."

I proceed now to the *second* and chief thing proposed from this passage, which was to explain the duty of trust in God, and to point out its foundation.

Trust, in the most general view we can take of it, may be thus explained. It is a reliance or confidence in God, that however discouraging appearances may be for the present time, yet, by his power and wisdom, our desires and expectations shall take place, whether as to deliverance from trouble, or the obtaining of future blessings.—When we can attain this happy frame of spirit, it is an inconceivable relief and ease to the mind under suffering, and is excellently expressed by the Psalmist—Psal. lv. 22. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain "thee, he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Let us then endeavor to explain the grounds of this as distinctly as possible. And God grant that it may be done, not only in a clear, but in a solid and satisfying manner, so as to assist you in the practice of real and vital religion.

I have already said, that our expectation is from the power and wisdom of God. May we then reasonably expect, and is it our duty to believe, that we shall receive all that we desire, and that is within the reach of divine power and wisdom? These have no bounds at all. We know that nothing is too hard for the Almighty. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. This suggests to us that there is something more necessary, in order to lay a proper foundation for trust, viz. his goodness, to make our expectation probable, and his promise to make it certain. Even created beings can often do what they will not. This holds particularly with regard to God, whose power is directed in its exercise by his goodness, and limited by his wisdom. His goodness, in general, encourages us to go to him with a peradventure, or who can tell whether he may not be gracious? But in order to make our trust both distinct and strong, we must go to his promise, "for "he is faithful and keepeth covenant and truth for ever." Trust then, my brethren, rests ultimately on the promise. It must be precisely commensurate, or of the same extent with the promises. Whoever doubts or calls in question the certainty of what God hath promised, is chargeable with distrust; and whoever expects to receive, in kind or degree, more than he has promised, is so far guilty of presumption. This is the general rule, and I think it carries such evidence with it, that every one must be sensible it is just, who hath heard it with any measure of attention.

But the great difficulty yet remains, which is, to apply this rule to the various cases that occur in the spiritual life, and to tell any particular person what it is his duty firmly to believe, and hope he shall receive from God, and what it would be presumptuous and sinful in him to fix his expectation on. This is plainly of the greater importance, that the more particular our trust is, as to the object of desire, it is the more powerful a support to the mind. At the same time it frequently happens, that the more particularly our desires are formed, the foundation of our hope appears the more uncertain and questionable. On this account you may observe, that it is of the greatest moment

to underſtand the nature and tenor of the promiſes; or rather, indeed, to explain the foundation of truſt, and to explain the nature and tenor of the promiſes is one and the ſame thing.

For this end, it may be proper to diſtinguiſh the promiſes of God, as to futurity, into two heads, abſolute and conditional. By abſolute promiſes, in this place, I underſtand only thoſe that are ſo in the moſt unlimited ſenſe, that is to ſay, revealed as a part of the fixed plan of Providence, ſuſpended on no terms but what all, of every character, may expect will certainly come to paſs. Such are the promiſes after the flood, that ſummer and winter, ſeed time and harveſt ſhould not fail—the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh at the fulneſs of time, to the ancient Patriarchs, and to us—the downfall of Antichriſt—the preſervation of a church on earth, let its enemies be or do what they will—the calling of God's ancient people, the Jews, and the coming of Chriſt to judge the world at the laſt day. Theſe are all called promiſes in ſcripture, and ſo far as they can be of any uſe to the people of God, either for direction in duty, or reſtraint from ſin, or conſolation under trial, they are to be depended on, in the moſt abſolute manner, for they reſt upon the certainty of the holy ſcriptures, and the truth of the unchangeable God, who "is "not a man that he ſhould lie, nor the ſon of man that he "ſhould repent."

TRUST IN GOD.

SERMON 26.

ISAIAH l. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

HAVING, in a former diſcourſe, opened the character and ſtate of thoſe who are called upon, and exhorted to truſt in the name of the Lord, and entered upon the ſecond thing propoſed, which was to explain the duty of truſt in God, and to point out its foundation; and having in this view conſidered the nature of abſolute promiſes—I proceed,

2. To conſider the nature and uſe of conditional promiſes. Theſe I am obliged, for greater diſtinctneſs, to divide into three different heads.—1. There are promiſes made to perſons of ſuch or ſuch a character, or in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate.—2. There are promiſes, the performance of which is ſuſpended on our compliance with ſomething previouſly required, as the condition of obtaining them.—3. There are promiſes, not only ſuſpended on both the preceding terms, but upon the ſuppoſition of ſome circumſtances in themſelves uncertain, or to us unknown. Let us conſider each of theſe with care and attention.

1. There are promiſes made to perſons of ſuch or ſuch a character, or in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate, which are, therefore, to be applied, and reſted on, according as the evidence of our being of this character, or in this ſtate, is clear or obſcure. In this I have particularly in view. the bleſſings of ſalvation, the pardon of ſin, peace with God, the ſpirit of ſanctification, and a right to everlaſting life. Theſe all lie in an unbroken chain and inſeparable connexion, and might have been more briefly expreſſed, by an intereſt in Chriſt the Saviour, who is the author, ſource and ſum of theſe bleſſings; "for all the promiſes of God "in him, are yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God "by us." Let no judicious attentive hearer be ſurpriſed or diſſatisfied, that I have ranked theſe among conditional promiſes, for you may obſerve that I have expreſſed myſelf thus, they are promiſes made to perſons of ſuch or ſuch a character, or in ſuch or ſuch a ſtate. In this, they certainly differ from the promiſes properly abſolute, mentioned above. It is far from my intention to do injury to that fundamental truth, that ſalvation is by grace. I eſteem that doctrine which proceeds upon a ſelf-righteous ſyſtem, to be contrary to the word of God, and moſt pernicious to the ſouls of men. There is nothing at all required in ſcripture to be performed by us, as a purchaſing or meriting condition. Every gracious act of the divine government in our favor, is the fruit of the Redeemer's purchaſe, and every holy diſpoſition wrought in us, is the effect of his almighty grace. But it is certain, at the ſame time, that in order to our accepting thoſe bleſſings, we muſt be truly and deeply humbled, and ſee ourſelves to be incapable and helpleſs. We muſt be unfeignedly willing to renounce all claim of merit, and accept of ſalvation as it is offered in the goſpel; that is, in its full extent, and in the free and ſovereign manner of its communication. So far, ſurely, we muſt ſay, the promiſes of the goſpel are conditional, or wholly pervert the word of God. I know of no promiſes then to the unbelieving and impenitent, unleſs you call that a promiſe, that they ſhall have "their portion "in the lake of fire that burneth with brimſtone; and that "the ſmoke of their torment aſcendeth up for ever and "ever."

Hear it, my dear brethren, it is the needy, thirſty, ſenſible ſoul, that is invited to come and find reſt. "Ho! "every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters; and he "that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come "buy wine and milk without money and without price. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, "and I will give you reſt." If any ſhall think fit further to ſay, that the very deſtination of the veſſels of mercy, is of God's ſovereign pleaſure, that conviction itſelf is by a day of his power, and that faith which intereſts us in Chriſt's righteouſneſs is his gift; I agree to the whole, but obſerve that it is improperly introduced here. No uſe can poſſibly be made of the divine decree in the application of the promiſes. It is inverting the order of things. Can any man ſay, I truſt in the mercy of God, becauſe I have been ordained to everlaſting life? No man can derive comfort from this, till by his effectual calling it is publiſhed, and begins to be accompliſhed; and then he may look back with wonder and gratitude to that everlaſting love, by which he was choſen in Chriſt, before the foundation of the world. Can you judge of the fruit of a tree by looking upon the root? No, but you judge of the ſtrength and deepneſs of the root, by the fulneſs of the fruit, and the vigor and verdure of the branches. From an improper mixture of what belongs to the ſecret will of God, and what belongs to us, as our duty, much error and confuſion ariſes.

Now, my brethren, as to the application of theſe promiſes of pardon and peace, the humbled ſinner, the man among us who walketh in darkneſs and hath no light—who is burdened with a ſenſe of guilt, and diſcouraged by the threatenings of the law, the accuſations of conſcience, and the pure and holy nature of God; who perhaps has all this aggravated by diſtreſs and trouble, is called to truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay himſelf upon his God. He is invited to conſider and reſt on the extent of the call, the immutability of the promiſe, and the riches of divine grace. If he is ſo far from pleading any merit in himſelf, or being diſſatisfied with the plan of ſalvation laid down in the Goſpel, that he is making every thing an argument

againſt himſelf, and dare not lay hold of, or appropriate ſo unſpeakable a mercy: This is juſt the effect of diſtruſt, and he is called, in the ſtrongeſt manner, in the text, to "truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay upon his God." With how many gracious aſſurances for this purpoſe is the ſcripture filled. John vi. 37. "All that the Father hath "given me ſhall come to me, and him that cometh unto "me I will in no wiſe caſt out." Heb. vii. 25. "Where-"fore he is able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt that "come to God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make in-"terceſſion for them." Rev. xxii. 17. "And the ſpirit "and the bride ſay, Come. And let him that heareth ſay, "Come. And let him that is athirſt come. And who-"ſoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." All things, Chriſt excepted, are to be renounced, and the all-ſufficiency of a Redeemer is to be the foundation of our hope. The penitent will ſay with the apoſtle, Phil. iii. 8, "Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the ex-"cellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord: "for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do "count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt, and be "found in him, not having mine own righteouſneſs which "is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, "even the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith."

2. There is a ſecond claſs of promiſes, the performance of which is ſuſpended on our previous compliance with ſomething required as the condition of obtaining them. In theſe we are not only called to accept of the divine mercy, but commanded to obey the divine will. The order in which I have placed theſe, will, I hope, prevent you from miſunderſtanding or miſapplying what may be ſaid on them. This claſs includes all the promiſes in ſcripture regarding the daily progreſs of a believer in his ſanctification and conformity to God, as well as the increaſe of his comfort and peace. I am ſenſible, that as the reconciliation of a ſinner to God, and his right to what is called in ſcripture *the promise* of eternal life, is of free and unmerited mercy, ſo, no doubt, all the inferior or ſubordinate promiſes flow from the ſame ſource, nay, in a certain meaſure, they are entirely upon the ſame footing with

thoſe formerly mentioned; that is to ſay, final perſeverance, real growth in the ſpiritual life, and neceſſary comfort, are the ſure and purchaſed portion of every one that is born of God. Rom. viii. 29. "For whom he did fore-"know, he alſo did predeſtinate to be conformed to the "image of his Son, that he might be the firſt born among "many brethren." But in the diſtribution of thoſe gifts, particularly in their meaſure, there is not only an unknown regard to the good pleaſure of God, but a known and eſtabliſhed regard to our conduct in duty. Thus the abundant ſupply of the ſpirit is the fruit and return of diligence in prayer. Matth. vii. 7. "Aſk and it ſhall be "given you, ſeek and ye ſhall find, knock and it ſhall be "opened unto you." See alſo Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. compared with the 37th. "Then will I ſprinkle clean water "upon you, and ye ſhall be clean; from all your filthineſs "and from all your idols will I cleanſe you." &c. Thus "ſaith the Lord, yet for all this will I be enquired of by "the houſe of Iſrael to do it for them." Thus alſo inward conſolation, as well as outward ſecurity, is expreſsly promiſed as the effect and reward of uniformity and diligence in duty. Iſa. xxxii. 17. "And the work of righteouſneſs "ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs "and aſſurance for ever." As the counterpart and illuſtration of this, you ſee, that a departure from the path of duty brings on the threatened, or perhaps I ought to call it the promiſed, rod of correction. Pſalm lxxxix. 30—33. "But if his children ſhall forſake my law, and not walk "in my judgments; if they break my ſtatutes, and keep "not my commandments; then will I viſit their tranſ-"greſſions with a rod, and their iniquities with ſtripes. "Nevertheleſs, my loving-kindneſs will I not take from "him, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail." In the ſame manner, Iſa. xl. 30, 31. "Even the youths ſhall faint and "be weary, and the young men ſhall utterly fall: But "they that wait upon the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength; "they ſhall mount up with wings as eagles; they ſhall "run and not be weary—they ſhall walk and not faint." Agreeably to all this, you know, our bleſſed Lord preſcribed watchfulneſs and prayer as the great preſervatives

againſt temptation, and whoever expects either ſpiritual ſtrength or comfort, while he relaxes his diligence in the way of duty, is guilty of that ſin, which is called in ſcripture, tempting God; and ſhall aſſuredly meet with a dreadful diſappointment.

My brethren, as much of the daily exerciſe of real believers regards their progreſs in ſanctification, and their peace and comfort, it is proper that you ſhould carefully attend to the tenor of theſe promiſes, and to what ought to be your reliance upon them. I ſhall ſum up, in a few particulars, what I apprehend to be of moſt importance.

1. Truſt in theſe promiſes implies ſelf-denial, and a deep ſenſe of your own weakneſs. Theſe promiſes would be unneceſſary and ſuperfluous, were we not inſufficient of ourſelves for any thing that is good. Truſt in God ſtands directly oppoſed to all ſelf-dependance. Proverbs iii. 5. "Truſt in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to "thine own underſtanding." How jealous God is, if I may ſpeak ſo, of the honor that is due to him in this reſpect, may be ſeen from the many foul and ſhameful crimes into which he permitted ſome of his beſt ſaints to fall, when they were off their guard by ſloth, or ſtill more provoked him by pride and preſumption. Noah's drunkenneſs, Moſes's paſſion, David's adultery and murder, and Peter's denial of his maſter. 1 Cor. x. 11, 12. "Now "all theſe things happened unto them for enſamples, and "they are written for our admonition, upon whom the "ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that "thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall." For this reaſon the apoſtle Paul ſays with great propriety, and with great force, which is equally applicable to himſelf and other believers, a ſeeming paradox. 1 Cor. xii. 10. "For "when I am weak, then I am ſtrong."

2. As we are to put no truſt in ourſelves, ſo we are to exerciſe the moſt unſhaken confidence of our being able to diſcharge any duty or undergo any trial by the help of the Almighty—Oh! how ready are we to ſin on both hands? How often do we preſume upon our own ſtrength and forget the neceſſity of applying for divine aid?—And on the other hand, how prone are we to timidity or de-

ſpondence in difficult caſes? When corruptions have long kept their ground, we are ready to dread their influence, and to make but little out of the promiſes in ſcripture, that we ſhall be made "more than conquerors through "him that loved us." We have learned, by ſad experience, that in us dwelleth no good thing, and yet it is long before we will attend to the leſſon that follows hard upon it, "My grace is ſufficient for thee, and my ſtrength "ſhall be made perfect in weakneſs."

3. As theſe promiſes are expreſsly made to the diligent, you muſt ſtill remember that your own attention and application to duty is eſſentially neceſſary, and that the aſſiſtance promiſed from on high, is always repreſented in ſcripture as an argument and encouragement to diligence, and not a warrant or excuſe for ſloth. Philip. ii. 12. "Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling, "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of "his good pleaſure." It is alſo well worthy of notice, that the ſame prophet Ezekiel, who ſays, chap. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart alſo will I give you, and a new "ſpirit will I put within you," changes the form of his expreſſion; and in another place, chap. xviii. 31, 32, ſpeaks in the following terms; "Caſt away from you all "your tranſgreſſions whereby ye have tranſgreſſed; and "make you a new heart and a new ſpirit; for why will "ye die, O houſe of Iſrael? For I have no pleaſure in "the death of him that dieth, ſaith the Lord God; where-"fore turn yourſelves, and live ye." In conſequence of this,

4. In the laſt place, truſt in God will make us ready to acknowledge, that when we fail in duty, when we forget or break our reſolutions, the fault is certainly in ourſelves. It is impoſſible to excuſe or juſtify ourſelves in any degree, without laying the blame, in the ſame proportion, upon God, and calling in queſtion his faithfulneſs and truth. But whatever our treacherous hearts may ſinfully ſuggeſt, we are not ſtraitened in God, but ſtraitened in our own bowels. We find him pleading his own cauſe, in this reſpect, in many paſſages of ſcripture. Iſa. lix. 1. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not ſhortened,

" that it cannot ſave ; neither his ear heavy, that he can-
" not hear ; but your ſins have ſeparated between you and
" your God, and your iniquities have hid his face from
" you, that he will not hear." Upon the whole, truſt in theſe promiſes is no other than an humble and diligent application to duty, under a deep ſenſe of weakneſs, and dependance on promiſed ſtrength, accompanied with a firm perſuaſion, that " in the name of the Lord we ſhall " tread down our enemies," and go on from ſtrength to ſtrength, " till we appear before God in Zion."

3. Another claſs of promiſes are thoſe that are ſuſpended, not only on the ſame conditions with the two former, but upon ſome other circumſtances in themſelves uncertain, or to us unſeen. Theſe are temporal mercies or rather temporal proſperity, deliverance from preſent diſtreſs, and abundance or affluence of outward enjoyments. Perhaps we may alſo add ſpiritual conſolation, and ſenſible joy in God. I find no temporal promiſe preciſely fixed to the ſervant of God but this: " Bread " ſhall be given him, and his water ſhall be ſure ?" and it is certainly his duty, in the moſt ſtraitening circumſtances, to maintain a confident dependance on the power and wiſdom of Providence for neceſſary ſupply. I do not condemn thoſe, who, when reduced to extremity, have actually pleaded this divine promiſe, and againſt hope, have believed in hope; and I am perſuaded, inſtances have not been wanting, of relief furniſhed in a manner next to miraculous. But as to every other degree of temporal proſperity, God hath reſerved it in his own hand to give or with-hold it at his pleaſure, that is, as he ſees it will be moſt for his glory, and the benefit of his people. It is lawful then, my brethren, for you to endeavor to procure, by honeſt induſtry, the increaſe of your ſubſtance, to look well to the ſtate of your flocks and your herds, and to aſk by prayer the bleſſing of God upon your labors. It is lawful, and it is your duty, by regularity and care to preſerve life and health, as well as to aſk of the Father of your ſpirits, recovery from ſickneſs, or deliverance from any other kind of diſtreſs. But you are not warranted to believe that theſe petitions ſhall be granted in hand, or in

your own time and measure, even though you ask them in sincerity with the prayer of faith. There may be reasons for with-holding them, and yet you may be accepted in your prayers. An infinitely wise God knows best what is for your good, and he only hath a right to determine in what part of his own service; where and how long he shall employ you. Trust in God, therefore, in this respect, implies a careful attention to the tenor of the promises with regard to temporal mercies, and not to look for, or even, if possible, desire what he hath not promised to bestow.

If I am not mistaken, we shall find it of moment, upon this subject, to observe, both what he hath not and what he hath certainly promised. He has no where promised that his own people shall be the richest or the greatest on earth; but he hath certainly promised to bless their provision, and assured them that a little that a just man hath, shall be better than the riches of many wicked. He has not promised that they shall be free from suffering; but he hath certainly promised to support them by his own presence under their distress. Isa. xliii. 2. "When thou "passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and "through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when "thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; "neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." The truth is, he hath promised that "all things shall work together "for their good." In one word, they have indeed all mercies promised, only they themselves are not in a condition, at present, to judge what they may use with safety, and what not. As the heir of an opulent estate, though he is proprietor of all, yet is laid under restraint while in infancy and non-age, because he would soon ruin himself if it were committed to his own management; so the believer, though an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ, yet till he is meet for the inheritance, he must be at his Maker's and Redeemer's dispofal. Take in, therefore, only this limitation, and then see his extensive charter. 1 Cor. iii. 21. "For all things are yours; whether Paul, "or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, "or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and

" ye are Chriſt's, and Chriſt is God's." What then is the duty of a child of God? It is to breathe after more and more ſubmiſſion to the divine will, and to annex this reſervation to every petition of a temporal nature, nevertheleſs, not my will but thine be done. And oh! my brethren, how happy the perſon who hath ſeen the weakneſs of human judgment; who waits the intimation of God's will, before he will ſuffer his deſires to faſten with eagerneſs on any earthly comfort, and who endeavors to keep himſelf free from perplexity, by an humble and ſubmiſſive reliance on the all-ſufficiency of God!

I obſerved in entering on this part of the ſubject, that ſpiritual conſolation, or ſenſible joy in God, is to be conſidered as a promiſe of the ſame claſs, which muſt, therefore, be aſked with ſubmiſſion, and is diſpenſed according to the good pleaſure of a gracious but ſovereign God. I am ſenſible, as has been formerly obſerved, with another view, that ſome degree of comfort neceſſarily follows from a believer's relation to God, but many pious perſons ſeem to deſire and to expect ſenſible comfort in a higher meaſure than God ſees it meet to give them, or, than is proper for them in the preſent ſtate. It is with ſpiritual proſperity as with temporal, every one cannot bear it. Therefore, it is our duty ſtill to be ſenſible that we have much more comfort and peace than we deſerve, and as we deſire and ſtrive for greater degrees of it, to accompany theſe deſires with much humility and reſignation to the will of God.

I proceed now to the laſt thing propoſed, which was to make a practical application of this ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

1. From what has been ſaid, you may ſee what judgment you ought to form of inward ſuggeſtions, and ſtrong or particular impreſſions upon your minds. There are ſome extremely prone to interpret a text of ſcripture, ſuddenly ſuggeſted to their minds, or any ſtrong impreſſion made on them, as an immediate meſſage from God, to be directly applied to themſelves: Others, in oppoſition to this, as enthuſiaſtical and viſionary, ſeem to give up every expectation of being able to ſay with the Pſalmiſt,

" I bleſs the Lord who hath given me counſel, my reins " alſo inſtruct me in the night ſeaſon." I beg, therefore, that you may obſerve, that the ſuggeſtion of a paſſage of ſcripture, of itſelf gives no title to the immediate application of it, becauſe the great deceiver may undoubtedly ſuggeſt ſcripture, as we find he could reaſon from it in our Saviour's temptation. We are, in every ſuch caſe, to conſider the tenor of it, if it be a promiſe or encouragement, that is, how and in what manner it may be ſafely applied. If any thing happens to be ſuggeſted that expreſsly ſuits our preſent condition, either by ſetting home the obligation of duty, with particular evidence upon the conſcience, or pointing out the grounds of comfort, it ought to be thankfully acknowledged as from the ſpirit of God. For example, if a perſon under the power of a ſpirit of bondage, and fear of divine wrath, hath ſuggeſted to him any of the extenſive gracious aſſurances of mercy to the chief of ſinners, it is his duty to lay hold of it. It is directly ſuited to his condition, and would be the very thing that a wiſe and judicious paſtor would recommend to him for his relief. He may therefore, without heſitation, bleſs God for it, if it is brought with power and efficacy upon his heart. In the ſame manner, if a perſon under trouble hath ſuggeſted to him any of the promiſes of ſupport under it, ſurely he ought, in the diſcharge of his duty, firmly to rely on the accompliſhment of that part of the word of God. But in the reflex examination of a perſon's character or ſtate, to apply the ſudden ſuggeſtion of a promiſe or privilege, perhaps of a conditional nature, is certainly both ſinful and dangerous. Sinful, becauſe without warrant; and dangerous, becauſe leading to deluſion.

2. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee what it is that we ought to ſeek for with the greateſt earneſtneſs, and may hope to obtain with the greateſt confidence. Recollect, I beſeech you, the order in which I have mentioned the promiſes of God as the objects of truſt and reliance. Firſt of all the promiſes of ſalvation, deliverance from the guilt of ſin, and a right to everlaſting life; next

whatever is neceſſary to the preſervation and improvement of the ſpiritual life; and then in the third place, proper accommodation and ſuitable proviſion in our paſſage through the preſent world. They are here ranked according to their value in themſelves, and the value which we ſhould put upon them. Let us, therefore, take care that we never violate this order, which is neceſſary, not only becauſe of their comparative value, but becauſe of their mutual influence one upon another. It is in vain for us to expect to attain to the habit or practice of holineſs, till we are united to God by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. All the promiſes of the goſpel are ratified in him. All the divine fulneſs is treaſured up in him. Every divine gift is diſpenſed by him. Therefore, he ſays John xv. 4. "Abide "in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit "of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, "except ye abide in me." And the apoſtle Paul, Gal. ii. 20, "I am crucified with Chriſt; nevertheleſs I live; "yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and the life which I "now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of "God, who loved me, and gave himſelf for me."

In the ſame manner nothing can be more prepoſterous than to fix our affections upon temporal mercies, or our attention upon the promiſes that relate to them, ſo as to loſe view of our intereſt in God's favor, and the progreſs of our ſanctification. All the temporal promiſes in ſcripture are made to the children of God as ſuch, and for carrying on the purpoſes of his grace in them.—Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of theſe things. There is no promiſe in the whole volume of inſpiration to the wicked and impenitent. "There is no peace, ſaith my "God, to the wicked." He will either rebuke them in his wrath and chaſten them in his hot diſpleaſure, or give them up to a curſed, hardening, ſtupifying proſperity, than which, no ſtate on earth, is more to be dreaded.—Chriſtian! never ſuffer an anxiety about your outward ſtate to ſupplant or go before, or even to be ſeparated from a concern, that you may not be found wanting when weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary.

3. Let me beſeech you to adore the wiſdom, juſtice and mercy of God, in the order he hath eſtabliſhed, according to the different nature of the promiſes. That which is of moſt, nay, properly ſpeaking, of unſpeakable value, and radically contains all the reſt, is placed firſt in order, and offered in the moſt free and gracious manner, without money and without price. Salvation is preached to the chief of ſinners, and a Saviour held forth as able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come to God by him. Many uſes might be made of this, but the ſingle uſe I intend to make of it, at preſent, as connected with the duty of truſt, is to ſilence the complaints of envy and impatience. How prone are many to look with an evil eye upon the more extenſive poſſeſſions and greater apparent outward comfort which others enjoy? Does it not aſtoniſh you to think how much unbelief and ingratitude there is in thoſe repining thoughts? Meanneſs of rank, and poverty of ſtate, are no hinderance at all to an intereſt in Chriſt, and a right to everlaſting life. Nay, the goſpel is preached to the poor.—Many a Lazarus has been carried by the angels to Abraham's boſom, while the rich and luxurious have lifted up their eyes in torments. Will you, can you, dare you then complain? Will you envy the man of the world, his ſtately palace—his elegant furniture, and his ſumptuous fare? What is the ampleſt portion in the preſent life compared with the ſure mercies of David? What child of God would exchange with any wicked man a priſon for a palace, or a ſcaffold for a throne?

I beſeech you to add to all this, that, even with regard to preſent peace or comfort, there is no compariſon between a good man and a bad. "A man's life doth not "conſiſt in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſes." This is a truth not only often repeated in the ſacred oracles, but written in the cleareſt and moſt legible characters in the hiſtory of Providence.—Nay, even independently of virtue or religion itſelf, every human calamity, whether ariſing from ſickneſs, reproach, contention, fear, or ungratified deſire, rages with greater violence in the higher, than in the lower ſtations of life. A vain and conceited monarch once ſent to aſk at an heathen oracle,

who was the happieſt man on earth? and met with a deſerved diſappointment in the reply. If we ſhould put a queſtion much more profitable, as well as much more eaſily reſolved, in what rank of life the moſt exquiſite human miſery has been found? I have no doubt but it ought to be anſwered, upon a throne. Experience will always ratify the wiſe man's obſervation: *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a ſtalled ox and hatred therewith.* A ſanctified lot is an ineſtimable treaſure. The bleſſing of God on a cruiſe of oil, and a pot of meal, is better than inexhauſtible mines of gold and ſilver. What cauſe of contentment and patience to the child of God!

In the laſt place, you may learn from what has been ſaid on the ſubject, what is the plaineſt, the ſhorteſt, and indeed the only ſure way to deliverance from diſtreſs or calamity of whatever kind. It is to fly to the mercy of God through the blood of Chriſt, to renew the exerciſes of faith in him, and, in proportion as it pleaſes God to fill you with all joy and peace in believing, you will perceive every other covenant-bleſſing flow clear and unmixed from this inexhauſted ſource. It will lead to repentance, humiliation and ſubmiſſion. The ſanctified uſe of the affliction will be obtained, and this brings deliverance of itſelf; for no rod will be continued longer, than it hath anſwered its end. At any rate, when ſuffering is neceſſary, grace, to ſuffer with patience, ſhall not be withheld.—Would you have any more, and is not this remedy always at hand? Can the pooreſt man ſay it is not within the reach of his purſe? It is, at once, effectual and univerſal. It was once ſaid in contempt of a worthy and pious miniſter, that he made ſo much of the blood of Chriſt, that he would apply it even to a broken bone. But bating what may be thought indecent in the expreſſion, choſen on purpoſe to bring a good man into ridicule, the thing itſelf, I make bold to affirm, is a great and a precious truth. Faith in the blood of Chriſt makes a man ſuperior to all ſufferings. It ſoftens their aſpect—it abates their ſeverity—nay, it changes their nature. When a man is under diſtreſs or calamity of any kind, and conſiders it only in itſelf, and independently of his relation to God,

it retains its old nature, and taſtes with all the bitterneſs of the original curſe; but when it is conſidered as limited in its nature—in its meaſure and its continuance by a kind Saviour, the believer ſubmits to it with patience, as a part of his Creator's will; bears it with patience in his Redeemer's ſtrength, and ſometimes is enabled to embrace it with pleaſure, as ſerving to carry him to his Father's preſence. Is this going too far? No, my dear brethren; theſe are great realities to which the word of God, and the experience of his ſaints, bear united evidence. Many here preſent, I doubt not, have been witneſſes of this truth in the carriage of their relations now with God; and not a few, I truſt, will repeat the teſtimony to ſucceeding ages. I conclude all with that animated paſſage of the apoſtle Paul—2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. "For which cauſe we faint not; "but though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man "is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which "is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceed-"ing and eternal weight of glory."

On the PURITY of the HEART.

SERMON 27.

Proverbs xxx. 7, 8, 9.

Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.—

My Brethren,

OUR dependent condition as creatures, and much more our dangerous condition as ſinners, expoſed to daily temptation, renders prayer a duty of the moſt abſolute neceſſity. You muſt all be ſenſible, how frequent and preſſing the exhortations to it are in the holy ſcriptures. And, indeed, there cannot be a better evidence of a right temper of mind, than an habitual diſpoſition to the exerciſe of this duty.

But as prayer is a neceſſary duty, we ought to give the greater attention to the manner in which it is performed. We ought to aſk only for ſuch things as are truly ſafe and uſeful. We ought alſo to offer up our prayers with importunity, or reſerve, according to the nature and comparative importance of thoſe bleſſings we deſire to obtain.

All our wants are perfectly known to God; he is alſo the beſt judge of what is fit for us, and therefore, our petitions ſhould be well weighed, and expreſſed in ſuch terms, as, at the ſame time that they intimate our deſires, leave much to himſelf, as to the meaſure and manner of ſatisfying them.

We have an excellent example of this pious and prudent conduct, in the prayer of the prophet Agur, juſt read in your hearing. All his requeſts are ſummed up in two general heads. Theſe he ſeems to inſiſt upon, as abſolutely neceſſary to aſk, with that humble, holy confidence which is founded on the divine promiſe, that if we aſk any thing agreeable to his will, he heareth us. He ſeems alſo to aſk them, as what would fully ſatisfy him, and be ſufficient for the comfort of the preſent life, and the happineſs of the life to come. "Two things," ſays he, "have I required of thee, deny me them not before," or, as it ought rather to be tranſlated, "until I die."

Theſe two requeſts are conceived in the following terms —"Remove far from me vanity and lies, give me neither "poverty nor riches." The firſt, viz. "remove far from "me vanity and lies," evidently relates to the temper of his mind, and the ſtate of his ſoul. The ſecond, viz. "give me neither poverty nor riches," relates to his outward condition or circumſtances in the preſent life. There are two things in the general ſtructure of this comprehenſive prayer, that merit you particular attention. Firſt, The order of his requeſt; beginning with what is of moſt importance, the temper of his mind, and his hope towards God; and then adding, as but deſerving the ſecond place, what related to his preſent accommodation.

Secondly, The connection of his requeſts. The choice he makes as to his temporal condition, is in immediate and direct ſubſerviency to his ſanctification. This is plain from the arguments with which he preſſes, or the reaſons which he aſſigns for his ſecond petition. "Give me nei"ther poverty nor riches, leſt I be full and deny thee, "and ſay, who is the Lord? or leſt I be poor and ſteal, "and take the name of my God in vain."

My brethren, I am perſuaded that this ſubject can hardly be, at any time, unſeaſonable to a Chriſtian aſſembly, as our miſplaced, exceſſive, and unreaſonable deſires are the greateſt enemies to our progreſs in holineſs, as well as to our comfort and peace. Perhaps, however, there are ſome circumſtances that render it peculiarly proper for this auditory. Young perſons are very apt to cheriſh vaſt and boundleſs deſires as to outward things; and having not yet experienced the deceitfulneſs of the world, are apt to entertain exceſſive and extravagant hopes. The truth is, rich and poor, young and old, may here receive a leſſon of the utmoſt moment.

Let me therefore intreat your attention, while I endeavor to open and improve this paſſage of the holy ſcriptures; beginning, at this time, with the firſt requeſt—— "Remove far from me vanity and lies."

In diſcourſing on which, I will endeavor,

I. To explain the import of it, or ſhew at what it chiefly points, and to what it may be ſuppoſed to extend.

II. Apply the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

I. I am to explain the import of the prophet's prayer, or ſhew at what it chiefly points, and to what it may be ſuppoſed to extend, in the petition, "Remove far from "me vanity and lies." The word *vanity*, eſpecially when it is joined, as it is frequently in ſcripture, with *lying*, or *lies*, is of a very large and comprehenſive ſignification. The word in the original, tranſlated *vanity*, properly ſignifies *lightness* or *emptiness*; and *lies* ſignify *falsehood*, in oppoſition to *truth*.

I imagine we ſhall have a clear conception, both of the meaning and force of this phraſe, if we make the following remark: God himſelf is the great fountain of life and exiſtence; the great I AM, as he emphatically ſtyles himſelf to Moſes; the *original* and the *only reality*, if I may ſo ſpeak. All other beings have only a dependent and precarious exiſtence; ſo that the creation itſelf, though his own work, compared to him, is vanity. "Vanity of

" vanities, ſaith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is va-
" nity." Therefore, in a particular manner, the word is often uſed to denote the folly of all idolatrous worſhip; or the giving the reſpect and honor to any thing elſe, which is due to God alone. " They have moved me to jealouſy
" with that which is not God, they have provoked me to
" anger with their vanities. Are there any among the
" vanities of the Gentiles, that can cauſe rain; or can
" the heavens give ſhowers, art thou not he, O Lord our
" God."

Sometimes it is uſed to denote the *folly* or *unprofitableneſs* of any vice, and particularly of an ill-founded conceit of ourſelves, as well as of all fraud and diſſimulation, in word or action. So that this prayer for our ſouls, ſhort as it appears to be, when conſidered in its full extent, will be found to contain a great variety of important matter.—This I ſhall endeavor to give you a brief account of, under the following particulars.

1. We are hereby taught to pray, that we may be preſerved by divine grace, from all falſe and erroneous principles in religion; ſo as we may neither be deceived by them ourſelves, nor any way inſtrumental in deceiving others. This, by what has been ſaid of the uſe of the words in ſcripture, appears to be implied in the requeſt, and it is of more moment than ſome are willing to allow. The underſtanding being the leading faculty, an error *there*, ſpreads its unhappy influence through the whole temper and life. Whereas, on the contrary, light in the mind produces fidelity and ſecurity in the conſcience, and tenderneſs in the converſation. You may obſerve, that through the whole hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, idolatry, or a departure from the knowledge and worſhip of the true God, is the leading ſin, and the fruitful ſource of every other vicious practice. We ſometimes, indeed, ſeem to ſtand aſtoniſhed at the exceſſive proneneſs of the ancient Jews to this ſin. But we need only a little reflection to diſcover, that an evil heart of unbelief continues the ſame at bottom, and daily produces the like dangerous effects. How prone have men been in all ages, to depart from the ſimplicity of the truth In how many different ſhapes

have they perverted it! One age, or one country, has been polluted by one error, and another by an oppoſite, impelled by the unſtable and irregular fancies of men of corrupt minds. In the laſt age, the great theme of the carnal reaſoner was, to attempt to expoſe the ſcripture doctrine of God's certain knowledge, and preciſe ordination of all events; and in this, fate and neceſſity have become the ſtrong hold of infidelity, and are embraced, or ſeem to be embraced, by every enemy of true religion without exception. Error, ſhifting its ground, indeed, is but natural; for lying vanities are innumerable; but the true God is the ſame "yeſterday, to day, and forever."

At this very time, how abounding and prevalent is infidelity, calling in queſtion the moſt important and fundamental principles, both of natural and revealed religion! And how properly is this deſcribed, by the expreſſion in the text, *vanity and lies;* for it always takes its riſe from the pride and vanity of the human heart! Sometimes a pride of underſtanding, which aſpires to paſs judgment on things far above its reach, and condemn things long before they are examined and underſtood: Sometimes, alſo, from a pride of heart, or ſelf-ſufficiency, that is unable to endure the humbling and mortifying view, given us in ſcripture, of our character and ſtate. Oh how readily do men turn aſide from the truth! With what greedineſs do they drink in the flattering but deſtructive poiſon! Need I point out to you the fatal effects of ſuch principles taking place? It looſens the obligations to obedience, takes off the edge of the reproofs of conſcience, and thus removing reſtraints, leaves men, in the emphatical language of the holy ſcripture, "to walk in the ways of their own hearts, "and in the ſight of their own eyes."

But in this requeſt, "remove far from me vanity and "lies," I would not have you confine your views to the moſt groſs infidelity and avowed oppoſition to God. Pray alſo, that you may be preſerved from error, or miſtake of any kind; but eſpecially ſuch as have the greateſt influence on the ſubſtance of religion.

A clear apprehenſion of the holy nature, and righteous government of God—the infinite evil of ſin—the founda-

tion of our peace in the blood of the atonement—and the renewing of our natures by the Holy Ghoſt, ſeem to me abſolutely neceſſary to true and undefiled religion. And they are the truths, which particularly ſerve to exalt the Creator, and lay the creature in the duſt. When, therefore, we conſider how grateful to corrupt nature every thing is, that tends to foſter pride—to create ſecurity, and ſet the mind at eaſe, in the indulgence of ſin; we muſt be ſenſible of how great importance it is, to pray for divine direction, and divine preſervation. Nothing is more dangerous to men than confidence and preſumption—nothing more uſeful in faith and practice, than humility and ſelf-denial.

2. This prayer implies, a deſire that we may be preſerved from ſetting our affections on ſuch objects, as are but vain and unſatisfying, and will, in the end, diſappoint our expectation. I take this to be not only a part, but a very important part of the prophet's meaning. The world is the great ſource of temptation; the powerful and unhappy influence of which we may daily ſee; or rather, all of us daily and ſenſibly feel. What is it poſſeſſes the fancy, miſleads the judgment, inflames the affections, conſumes the time, and ruins the ſoul, but theſe preſent enjoyments, of which the wiſeſt of men, after a full trial of them, hath left us their character *vanity of vanities.*

I am ſenſible that I have now entered upon a ſubject, which is far from being difficult to enlarge upon, and yet perhaps, very difficult to treat with propriety, or in ſuch a manner, as to have the intended effect. There is nothing more eaſy than, in a bold declamatory way, to draw pictures of the vanity of human life. It hath been done by thouſands, when, after all their broken ſchemes, and diſappointed views, they have juſt ſuffered ſhipwreck upon the coaſt of the enchanted land of hope. But from ſuch men we may expect to hear the language of deſpair, rather than of experience; and as it is too late for the inſtruction of the ſufferers, ſo it very rarely has any effect in warning others to avoid the danger. What I would, therefore, willingly attempt, is, to conſider this matter in a ſober ſcriptural light; if ſo be that it may pleaſe God

to carry conviction to our hearts, and make it truly uſeful, both to ſpeaker and hearers.

Let me, therefore, my brethren, point out to you, preciſely, wherein the vanity of the world lieth. The world, in itſelf, is the workmanſhip of God, and every thing that is done in it, is by the ordination, or permiſſion of God. As ſuch, it is good, and may be uſed in ſubſerviency to his honor, and our own peace. But through the corruption of our nature, the creature becomes the rival and competitor of the Creator for our hearts.—When we place our ſupreme happineſs upon it, inſtead of making it a mean of leading us to God, then its inherent vanity immediately appears.—When men allow themſelves in the indulgence of vicious pleaſures, how juſtly may they be called *vanity and lies?* They are ſmiling and inviting to appearance, but how dreadful and deſtructive in their effects? "Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away "the heart." Thoſe who refuſe to be confined by the laws of piety and ſobriety, *vainly* think they are walking at liberty, when they are bringing themſelves into ſubjection to the ſevereſt and moſt inflexible of all maſters. Read the juſt and ſtriking deſcription, by Solomon, of the effects of whoredom; and reflect on the innumerable calamities brought, in every age, on perſons and families by unbridled luſt. See alſo the effects of intemperance and exceſs—"Wine is a mocker, ſtrong drink is raging, "and whoſoever is deceived thereby is not wiſe." And again: "the drunkard and glutton ſhall come to poverty. "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth "its colour in the cup, when it moveth itſelf aright; at "laſt, it biteth like a ſerpent, and ſtingeth like an adder."

Think on the unhappy conſequences, of diſhoneſty and fraud. "Bread of deceit is ſweet to a man, but after-"wards his mouth ſhall be filled with gravel."—You may alſo ſee, in innumerable paſſages of ſcripture, that oppreſſion of others, as it is a ſin of the deepeſt dye, ſo it is often remarkably overtaken, and puniſhed in the courſe of Providence, even in the preſent life. "Envy thou not the "oppreſſor, and chooſe none of his ways; for the froward

" is abomination to the Lord, but his ſecret is with the " righteous. The curſe of the Lord is in the houſe of the " wicked, but he bleſſeth the habitation of the juſt."

But there is ſomething more in this requeſt, than being preſerved from practices directly vicious; for the ſetting of our hearts upon worldly things, and making them our chief portion and delight, is certainly ſeeking after vanity and lies. They are far from affording that happineſs and peace, which we demand of them, and expect from them. " A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the " riches of many wicked." Can there be any thing more comfortable to experience, than that ſtrong expreſſion— " Thou prepareſt a table for me in the preſence of mine " enemies, thou anointeſt my head with oil, my cup run- " neth over." You may alſo find in the word of God, many warnings of the folly of thoſe, who travel in the path of ambition, and put their truſt in man. " Surely " men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree " are a lie. Put not your truſt in princes, nor in the ſon " of man, in whom there is no help. Happy is he that " hath the God of Jacob for his help, whoſe hope is in the " Lord his God." But the moſt comprehenſive remark of all upon this ſubject is, that human life itſelf is ſo exceedingly precarious, that it muſt write 'vanity and emp- 'tineſs' on every thing, the poſſeſſion and uſe of which is confined to the preſent ſtate. " Behold thou haſt made " my days as an hand-breadth." What a ſtriking picture does our Lord draw of the vanity of human happineſs, in that parable of the ground of the rich man, which brought forth plentifully? " And he thought within him- " ſelf, ſaying, what ſhall I do, becauſe I have no room " where to beſtow my fruits?"—And while this man is ſedulouſly employed in making proviſion for a long and happy life, "God ſaid unto him, thou fool, this night ſhall " thy ſoul be required of thee, then whoſe ſhall thoſe things " be which thou haſt provided?"

The whole of the preceding repreſentation may be ſummed up in this excellent ſentence of the wiſe man: " The wicked worketh a deceitful work; but to him that " ſoweth righteouſly ſhall be a ſure reward."

Now, my brethren, need I add, how prone we are to be led aſtray, in a greater or leſs degree, by ſuch "vanity "and lies?"—I do not inſiſt upon the many victims, which, in every age, have been ſeen to fall by the deſtructive hand of vice. How many have been ruined by luſt, ſlain by intemperance, or beggared by diſhoneſty! But I intreat you particularly to obſerve, that when we ſet our affections immoderately upon any earthly object or enjoyment, or when they are not truly ſanctified, how much they diſappoint our expectation in poſſeſſion, and what ſcenes of diſtreſs we prepare for ourſelves by their removal.

3. This requeſt, "remove far from me vanity and lies," implies, that God would graciouſly preſerve us from deceiving ourſelves, and thinking our character better, and our ſtate ſafer than it really is. When we take a view of the ſtate of the world, and the conduct of thoſe who have not yet caſt off all belief of eternity and a judgment to come, it is impoſſible to account for their ſecurity, but by a great degree of ſelf-deceit. We may ſay of them with the prophet Iſaiah, "He feedeth of aſhes; a deceived heart "hath turned him aſide, that he cannot deliver his ſoul, "nor ſay, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" And from the repreſentation given by our Saviour, it is plain, that many ſhall continue in their miſtake, and only be undeceived at the laſt day. "Not every one that ſaith unto me, "Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven." How awful a reflection this! How dreadful a diſappointment to diſcover our miſery, only when there is no more hope of eſcaping it! Is there not a poſſibility of this being the caſe with many of you, my brethren; and do you not tremble at the thought? I would not wiſh any, in general, to give way to a ſpirit of bondage, or ſlaviſh fear; but the beſt of the children of God have often diſcovered this holy jealouſy of themſelves. "Who can underſtand his "errors? Cleanſe thou me from ſecret faults. Keep back "thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins; let them not "have dominion over me, then ſhall I be upright, and I "ſhall be innocent from the great tranſgreſſion." And again; "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try

" me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any " wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

This leads me naturally to add upon this subject, that we ought to pray for preservation from self-deceit, as to particular branches of our character and conduct, as well as our general state.—Many, even upon the whole good men, are occasionally and insensibly brought, for a season, under the direction of sinful passions. They may be indulging themselves without suspicion, in what is, notwithstanding really provoking to God, injurious or offensive to others, and, in the issue, hurtful to their own peace. They may be making an enjoyment a talent, a relation an idol, when they think they are keeping within the bounds of duty. They may be indulging a sinful resentment, when they think they are promoting the glory of God. Many an excuse for neglecting commanded duty, from prudence or difficulty, satisfies ourselves, which will not stand in the day of trial. What reason for the prophet's prayer in the sense just now assigned, " Remove far from me vanity and " lies."

4. In the next place, this request implies, a desire to be preserved from pride and self-conceit, upon any subject. There is not any thing that affords a stronger evidence of our being unacquainted with ourselves, and our own state, than that propensity to pride and vanity, which is so common to us all. It is thought by many, that pride was the sin of the angels, that cast them down to hell. It is plain, that pride was the main ingredient in the first sin of man. And perhaps it is a just and proper description of all sin as such, that it is a dethroning of God, and setting up self to be loved, honored and served in his room. This sin is by no means confined to the worst of men, in whom it hath an absolute dominion; but retains and discovers an unhappy influence in the very best.—Every thing may be the fuel of pride: our persons, our performances, our relations, our possessions; nay, so pliable, and at the same time so preposterous is this disposition, that men are found sometimes proud of their very vices and defects. But how ill do pride and vanity suit such poor mortals as we are, who seem born but to die?—Who after passing

through a longer or ſhorter ſeries of weakneſſes, diſappointments and troubles, muſt, at laſt, be laid in the ſilent grave, to moulder in the duſt. We are dependant creatures, who have nothing, and can have nothing but what we receive from the unmerited favor of God. We are unwiſe and ignorant creatures, who know nothing to the bottom, and therefore, are liable to continual miſtakes in our conduct. Thoſe among us, who have the greateſt comprehenſion of mind, and know moſt, as it ſerves to ſhew the comparative ignorance of the bulk of mankind, ſo it ſerves to convince themſelves how little they do know, and how little they can know after all, compared with what is to them unſearchable.

But above all, we are ſinful creatures, who have rendered ourſelves, by our guilt, the juſt objects of divine diſpleaſure. Is there any who dares to plead exemption from this character? And do pride and vanity become thoſe, to whom they manifeſtly belong? Can any thing be more fooliſh, than indulging ſuch diſpoſitions? There is a very juſt expreſſion of one of the apocryphal writers: "Pride "was not made for man, nor a high look for him that is "born of a woman." Indeed they are ſo evidently unſuitable to our ſtate and circumſtances, that one would think, we ſhould need no higher principle than our own reaſon and obſervation to keep us free from them. We do, however, need the moſt earneſt and aſſiduous addreſſes to the throne of grace, to have all pride and vanity removed from us.—How hateful is pride to God! We are told, "he reſiſteth the proud." On the contrary, no diſpoſition is more amiable in his ſight, than humility. "He "giveth grace to the humble." And again: "To this "man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a con-"trite ſpirit, and trembleth at my word. For thus ſaith "the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whoſe "name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with "him alſo, that is of a contrite and humble ſpirit; to re-"vive the ſpirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of "the contrite ones."

It muſt, therefore, be the duty, and intereſt of every good man, not only to reſiſt pride and vanity, but to

make it a part of his daily ſupplication to God, that he may effectually be delivered from both.

5. In the laſt place: This requeſt implies a deſire to be delivered from fraud and diſſimulation of every kind. It is one of the glorious attributes of God, that he is a God of truth, who will not, and who cannot lie. He alſo requires of all his ſervants, and is delighted with truth in the inward parts. But there ſeems to be ſome difficulty in this part of the ſubject, more than in the others. Some will ſay, why pray to be delivered from fraud and diſſimulation? This might be an exhortation to the ſinner, but cannot be the prayer of the penitent. If they are ſincere in their prayer, it ſeems impoſſible there can be any danger of fraud. Fraud implies deliberation and deſign; and though it may be concealed from others upon whom it is exerciſed, it can never be concealed from the perſon in whom it dwells, and by whom it is contrived. This is the very language of ſome reaſoners, who infer from it, that though there are many other ſins to which a man may be liable without knowing it, yet this can never be the caſe with diſſimulation.

But, my brethren, if we conſider how apt men are, upon a ſudden temptation of fear or ſhame, or the proſpect of ſome advantage to themſelves, to depart from ſtrict veracity, and even to juſtify to their own minds, ſome kinds and degrees of deceptions, we ſhall ſee the abſolute neceſſity of making this a part of our prayer to God. Nay, perhaps I may go further and ſay, that we are as ready to deceive ourſelves in this point as in any other.

Upon this important ſubject, there is one conſideration to which I earneſtly intreat your attention. Thorough ſincerity, ſimplicity and truth, upon every ſubject, have, in the world, ſo much the appearance of weakneſs; and on the contrary, being able to manage and over-reach others, has ſo much the appearance of ſuperior wiſdom, that men are very liable to temptation from this quarter. It is to be lamented that our language itſelf, if I may ſo ſpeak, has received a criminal taint; for in common diſcourſe the expreſſion, *a plain well-meaning man* is always apprehended to imply, together with ſincerity, ſome degree

of weakneſs; although, indeed, it is a character of all others the moſt noble. In recommendation of this character let me obſerve, that in this, as in all the particulars mentioned above, "the wicked worketh a deceitful work; "but he that walketh uprightly walketh ſurely." Suppoſing a man to have the prudence and diſcretion not to ſpeak without neceſſity, I affirm there is no end which a good man ought to aim at, which may not be more certainly, ſafely, and ſpeedily obtained by the ſtricteſt and moſt inviolable ſincerity, than by any acts of diſſimulation whatever.

But after all, what ſignify any ends of preſent conveniency, which diſſimulation may pretend to anſwer, compared to the favor of God, which is forfeited by it? Hear what the Pſalmiſt ſays. "Who ſhall abide in thy taber- "nacle, who ſhall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh "uprightly and worketh righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh the "truth in his heart."—Let us, therefore, add this to the other views of the prophet's comprehenſive prayer—"Re- "move far from me vanity and lies."

For the improvement of this part of the ſubject, obſerve,

1. You may learn from it how to attain, not only a juſtneſs and propriety, but a readineſs and fulneſs in the duty of prayer.

Nothing is a greater hinderance, either to the fervency of our affections, or the force of our expreſſions in prayer, than when the object of our deſires is confuſed and general. But when we perceive clearly what it is that is needful to us, and how much we do need it, this gives us, indeed, the ſpirit of ſupplication. Perhaps it is more neceſſary to attend to this circumſtance, in what we aſk for our ſouls than for our bodies. When we want any thing that relates to preſent conveniency, it is clearly underſtood, becauſe it is ſenſibly felt.—There is no difficulty in crying for deliverance from poverty, ſickneſs, reproach, or any other earthly ſuffering; nay, the difficulty here is not in exciting our deſires, but in moderating them: not in producing fervor, but in promoting ſubmiſſion: But in what relates to our ſouls, becauſe many or moſt temptations are

agreeable to the flesh, we foresee danger less perfectly, and even feel it less sensibly; therefore, a close and deliberate attention to our situation and trials, as opened in the preceding discourse, is of the utmost moment, "both to carry "us to the throne of grace, and to direct our spirit when "we are there."

2. What hath been said will serve to excite us to habitual watchfulness, and to direct our daily conversation. The same things that are the subjects of prayer, are also the objects of diligence.—Prayer and diligence are joined by our Saviour, and ought never to be separated by his people.—Prayer without watchfulness is not sincere, and watchfulness without prayer will not be successful. The same views of sin and duty—of the strength and frequency of temptation, and the weakness of the tempted, lead equally to both. Let me beseech you then, to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Maintain an habitual diffidence of yourselves—Attend to the various dangers to which you are exposed. Watchfulness of itself will save you from many temptations, and will give you an inward warrant, and humble confidence, to ask of God support under, and deliverance from such as it is impossible to avoid.

3. In the last place, since every thing comprehended in the petition in the text, is viewed in the light of falsehood and deceit, suffer me, in the most earnest manner, to recommend to my hearers, and particularly to all the young persons under my care, "an invariable adherence to "truth, and the most undisguised simplicity and sincerity "in the whole of their conversation and carriage." I do not know where to begin or end in speaking of the excellency and beauty of sincerity, or the baseness of falsehood. Sincerity is amiable, honorable and profitable. It is the most shining part of a commendable character, and the most winning apology for any miscarriage or unadvised action. There is scarcely any action in itself so bad, as what is implied in the hardened front of him who covers the truth with a lie: Besides, it is always a sign of long practice in wickedness. Any man may be seduced or surprized into a fault, but none but the habitual villain

can deny it with ſteady calmneſs and obſtinacy. In this reſpect, we unhappily find ſome who are young offenders, but old ſinners.

It is not in religion only, but even among worldly men, that lying is counted the utmoſt pitch of baſeneſs; and to be called a liar *the most insupportable reproach.* No wonder, indeed, for it is the very eſſence of cowardice to dare to do a thing which you have not courage to avow. The very worſt of ſinners are ſenſible of it themſelves, for they deeply reſent the imputation of it; and, if I do not miſtake, have never yet arrived at the abſurdity of defending it. There is ſcarcely any other crime, but ſome are profligate enough to boaſt of it; but I do not remember ever to have heard of any who made his boaſt, *that he was a liar.* To crown all, lying is the moſt wretched folly. Juſtly does Solomon ſay: "A lying tongue is but for a "moment." It is eaſily diſcovered. Truth is a firm conſiſtent thing, every part of which agrees with, and ſtrongly ſupports another. But lies are not only repugnant to truth, but repugnant to each other; and commonly the means, like a treacherous thief, of the detection of the whole. Let me, therefore, once more recommend to every one of you, the noble character of ſincerity.—Endeavor to eſtabliſh your credit in this reſpect ſo entirely, that every word you ſpeak may be beyond the imputation of deceit; ſo that enemies may, themſelves, be ſenſible, that though you ſhould abuſe them, you will never deceive them.

SEEKING A COMPETENCY IN THE WISDOM OF PROVIDENCE.

SERMON 28.

PROVERBS XXX. 8.

Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me.

I PROCEED now to conſider the ſecond branch of the prophet's prayer, which regards his outward condition or circumſtances, in the preſent world. On this ſubject he expreſſes himſelf thus: "Give me neither poverty nor "riches."

Do not think, my brethren, that this is a ſubject of little importance; or that it is unconnected with the ſpiritual life. On the contrary, there are few things of more moment, than to have our deſires of temporal bleſſings limited and directed in a proper manner. Not only is worldly mindedneſs the everlaſting ruin of thoſe who are entirely under its dominion; but even good men are liable to many temptations from the ſame quarter. They may hurt their own peace, give offence to others, or leſſen their uſefulneſs by a ſinful exceſs in their attachment to the world, or by a criminal negligence in not giving a prudent and proper attention to it. Be not ſurpriſed that

I have mentioned the laſt of theſe as well as the firſt, for the prophet prays for deliverance from the temptation ariſing from both extremes. Idleneſs and ſloth are as contrary to true religion, as either avarice or ambition; and the habit when once taken, is perhaps more difficult to remove.

In order to treat this ſubject with the greater diſtinctneſs, I ſhall firſt ſhew you what we may learn in general from this prayer: ſecondly, explain the particular object of the prophet's deſire; and in the laſt place, make applications of what may be ſaid by recommending it to your choice.

I. In the firſt place, then, we may learn in general from this requeſt, that it is lawful to pray for temporal bleſſings. It is not unworthy of a Chriſtian, whoſe converſation is in heaven, to aſk of God, what is neceſſary to his ſupport and preſervation in the preſent life. If I were to mention all the examples of this in ſcripture, I ſhould tranſcribe a great part of the Bible. Though inferior in their nature and value to ſpiritual bleſſings, they are neceſſary in their place; and it is upon this footing they are expreſſly put by our Saviour. "Your heavenly Father knoweth "that ye have need of all theſe things." They are needful to the prolonging of our natural life till we finiſh our work, and are fitted for our reward. Therefore, though miracles are a kind of ſuſpenſion of the laws of nature, and the ordinary courſe of providence, yet we find God ſometimes working a miracle to ſupply the wants of his ſervants. It had been no more difficult for God to have kept Elijah from hungering, than to have made the ravens fetch him proviſion; or to have made, as in another caſe, a barrel of meal, or a cruiſe of oil, the laſting and ſufficient ſupport of a whole family. But he chooſes rather to ſupply the wants of his people, than cauſe them to ceaſe, that he may keep their dependance conſtantly in their view, and that a ſenſe of their neceſſities may oblige them to have continual recourſe to him for relief.

Again, we may here learn, that God is the real and proper giver of every temporal, as well as of every ſpiri-

tual bleſſing—A ſentiment this, of the utmoſt conſequence, to be engraven upon the heart. We have here an inſtance out of many, in which truths known and confeſſed by all, have notwithſtanding little hold upon the mind. How few are truly ſenſible of their continual obligations to the God of life? Conſider, I beſeech you, that whatever you poſſeſs of any kind, it the gift of God. He holdeth your ſoul in life, and guards you by his providence in your going out and in your coming in. He covereth your table and filleth your cup. Have you riches? It is by the bleſſing of the God of heaven—"The bleſſing of the Lord," ſaith Solomon, "it maketh rich. But thou ſhalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power "to get wealth." Have you credit and reputation? It is God that hideth you from the ſtrife of tongues. "Thou "ſhalt be hid from the ſcourge of the tongue, neither ſhalt "thou be afraid of deſtruction when it cometh." Have you friends? It is he that giveth you favor in their ſight. Have you talents and parts? It is the *inſpiration of the Almighty* that giveth thee underſtanding.

II. Let us now explain the particular tenor of this petition, and point out the object of the prophet's deſire: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." It is plain we are not to ſuppoſe the prophet, in any degree, refuſing ſubmiſſion to the will of God, by his thus making choice of a particular ſtate of life—Doubtleſs he reſolved to be at God's diſpoſal, and believed that he was able to ſanctify to him a ſtate of the higheſt proſperity, or of the deepeſt adverſity. It was no diſtruſt of God, but ſelf-denial and diffidence of his own ſtrength, that ſuggeſted this prayer. Therefore, in adjuſting his deſires and expectations, he pitches upon that ſtate that appeared to him liable to the feweſt ſnares. Thus our bleſſed Saviour, though it is his will that we ſhould fear no enemy when going out in divine ſtrength, yet teaches us to pray—"Lead us not "into temptation."

Poverty and riches are here mentioned as the two extremes; in neither of which we ſhould wiſh to be placed, but in a ſafer middle between the two; ſo as, if it pleaſe

God, we may neither be urged by preſſing neceſſity nor over-loaded with ſuch abundance as we may be in danger of abuſing.

But perhaps ſome will ſay, where is the middle? How ſhall we be able to determine what we ought to deſire, ſince there is ſo immenſe a diſtance, and ſo many intermediate degrees between the extremity of want, and the countleſs treaſures of the wealthy?

But, my brethren, if we do not hearken to the illuſive calls of ambition, avarice and luſt, it is by no means difficult to apprehend the meaning of the prophet, and apply it to perſons of every rank. Regard, no doubt, is to be had to the various ſtations in which God hath thought fit to place us. This difference of ſtation requires ſupplies of the conveniencies of life, ſuited to the part we are bound to act. That manner of life which would be decent and liberal in one ſtation, would be reckoned mean and ſordid in another. Therefore, what would be plenty and fulneſs to perſons in inferior ſtations, would be extreme poverty to perſons placed, and called to act, in higher and more exalted ſpheres. But after we have taken in the conſideration of every difference that may happen on this ſcore, there is ſomething in the prayer that belongs in common to *persons of all stations* namely, that we ſhould be modeſt in our deſires after temporal good things, and take care not to aſk only to gratify a ſenſual inclination, but for what is really neceſſary or uſeful to us. The laſt is reaſonable and allowable, the other is unreaſonable and juſtly condemned by the apoſtle James. "Ye aſk and "receive not, becauſe ye aſk amiſs, that ye may conſume "it upon your luſts."

But the firſt part of this requeſt is explained by the laſt, contained in the words, "feed me with food convenient "for me." That we may be able to enter into the true ſpirit of this petition, I ſhall juſt compare it with ſome other ſcriptural forms of prayer on the ſame ſubject, and then endeavor to point out what I take to be the chief inſtruction intended to be conveyed to us by it.

As to the ſcripture forms of prayer for temporal proviſion, the precedence is undoubtedly due to that excellent

form left us by our Saviour, in which we find this petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." You may next attend to the prayer put up by Jacob in ancient times.—"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with "me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will "give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I "come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the "Lord be my God." It is more than probable that the apostle Paul alludes to Jacob's expression, in his excellent advice to all Christians. "But godliness with content-"ment is great gain; for we brought nothing into this "world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out; and "having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. "But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a "snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which "drown men in destruction and perdition—for the love "of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced "themselves through with many sorrows."

It is obvious to remark, that all these prayers and this apostolic counsel run in the same strain. They all begin and are founded upon a regard to God, and a mind rightly disposed towards him: "If the Lord," says Jacob, "will be with me"—"Remove," says Agur in my text, "far from me vanity and lies." Our Saviour begins his prayer with petitions for the glory of God, with which the happiness of our souls is inseparably connected; and the apostle maintains *godliness* as the great source of contentment with our portion in this life.

We may further observe, that there is the same method observed in all these prayers. The expressions vary a little, but the request is the same. Jacob wishes for the divine protection, with food to eat, and raiment to put on. Agur for food convenient for him; and in the Lord's prayer we ask for our daily bread. There is no specifying of any particulars—no mention made of this or the other quantity of provision. Their desires are summed up in this general request, and the quantity and quality wholly referred to the good pleasure of God. It is certain that God hath sometimes granted to his own people, riches

in great abundance; and, at the ſame time, has given his bleſſing to enjoy them, and honored the poſſeſſors, by enabling them to glorify him in the uſe and application of them. But the direct deſire of riches, I do not think, hath any warrant from precept or example in his word. And when they are beſtowed as a bleſſing, and not a curſe, it is commonly on thoſe who, by their ſuperior concern about the better part, ſhew that they will put them to their proper uſe, as in the caſe of Solomon, recorded in the firſt book of Kings. "In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solo-
"mon in a dream by night; and God ſaid, aſk what I
"ſhall give thee. And he ſaid, give thy ſervant an un-
"derſtanding heart. And the ſpeech pleaſed the Lord,
"that Solomon had aſked this thing. And God ſaid, be-
"cauſe thou haſt aſked this thing, and haſt not aſked for
"thyſelf long life, neither haſt aſked riches for thyſelf,
"nor haſt aſked the life of thine enemies, but haſt aſked
"for thyſelf underſtanding, to diſcern judgment: Behold
"I have done according to thy words; lo, I have given
"thee a wiſe and an underſtanding heart, ſo that there
"was none like thee before thee, neither after thee ſhall
"any ariſe like unto thee. And I have alſo given thee
"that which thou haſt not aſked, both riches and ho-
"nor."

Now this I take to be the main inſtruction intended to be given us with reſpect to our prayers for temporal mercies; that we ſhould not pretend to ſet bounds to God, but leave the meaſure of them to his determination.

For further explaining this truth; and, at the ſame time recommending it to your regard, be pleaſed to attend to the following obſervations.

1. Conſider that God, infinitely wiſe, as well as gracious, is certainly the beſt judge of what is moſt fit and convenient for us. We know ſo little of ourſelves, that we really know not how we ſhould behave, if placed in particular circumſtances, until we are tried. The world has actually ſeen many examples of thoſe, who were loud in their accuſations of others, behaving worſe when placed in the ſame ſtations. And, indeed, I ſhould naturally expect, that an impatient, envious, diſobedient

ſubject would, if raiſed to power, be a cruel, inſolent, unjuſt oppreſſor; that a petulant, peeviſh, obſtinate ſervant would make a capricious, ſevere, unreaſonable maſter.

If we were to carve out our own lot, and to have all our own deſires gratified, there is great reaſon to preſume, we would throw ourſelves into the moſt diſagreeable circumſtances with regard to our ſouls, and probably conſult but ill for our peace and comfort in this world.

Let me put a few queſtions to every one that ſecretly murmurs at his ſtate. Are you ſure, that if you were advanced to a place of power and truſt, you would be able to carry with prudence, reſolution and integrity? Are you ſure, that if you were ſupplied with riches in great abundance, you would not allow yourſelves to wallow in pleaſure, or to ſwell in pride? Are you ſure, that if you were raiſed to high rank, ſurrounded by flatterers, and worſhipped by ſervants, you would, in that ſtanding, behave with humility and condeſcenſion; or that preſſed on all hands by buſineſs, company, or amuſements, you would ſtill religiouſly ſave your time for converſe with God?

A life of piety in an exalted ſtation is a continual conflict with the ſtrongeſt oppoſition. What ſays experience upon this ſubject? Solomon did not wholly, and to the end, reſiſt the temptation of riches and dominion. In the whole compaſs of hiſtory, ſacred and profane, I do not remember any example of a man's behaving better in point of morals, in a proſperous, than an afflicted ſtate, excepting one that hath this appearance, viz. Cicero, the Roman orator. His conduct in proſperity was full of dignity, and ſeemed wholly directed to the public good; whereas in adverſity, it was to the laſt degree mean and abject —But probably the reaſon of this was, that pride, or rather vanity, was his ruling paſſion, and the great motive to his illuſtrious actions; and when he fell into adverſity, this diſpoſition had no ſcope for its exerciſe.

Chriſtians, the Lord knoweth our frame, and is well acquainted with what we are able to bear, and conſequently what ſtate of life will be upon the whole moſt convenient for us. It is, therefore, our intereſt, as well as duty, to refer ourſelves entirely to him, and leave him to chooſe

for us. This is not only the doctrine of ſcripture, but ſo agreeable to reaſon and good ſenſe, that it has been acknowledged by ſeveral of the Heathen Philoſophers, who have expreſſed themſelves in terms perfectly ſimilar to thoſe of the inſpired writings. The prayer which Socrates taught his pupil Alcibiades, is very remarkable; that he ſhould beſeech the Supreme God to give him what was good for him, though he ſhould not aſk it; and to withhold from him whatever would be hurtful, though he ſhould be ſo fooliſh as to pray for it.

2. As God is certainly the beſt judge of what is good for us, ſo reſignation to him is a moſt acceptable expreſſion both of our worſhip and obedience. Single duties are particular acts; reſignation is the very *habit* of obedience. The wiſdom and goodneſs of God are acknowledged in the moſt authentic manner, when his holy and ſovereign Providence is humbly ſubmitted to, and cordially approved. Every impatient complaint is an impeachment of Providence; every irregular deſire is an act of rebellion againſt God. Therefore a ſubmiſſive temper muſt be highly pleaſing to God, and is the way to glorify him in the moſt unexceptionable manner. The rather indeed, as it is impoſſible to attain this temper, but by ſincerely laying hold of the covenant of peace, which is ordered in all things and ſure. This teaches us the grounds of ſubmiſſion. This procures for us the grace of ſubmiſſion. This ſtains the pride of all human glory. This changes the nature of our poſſeſſions to us, and us to them. This ſpiritualizes a worldly mind, and makes us know, in our own experience, that all the paths of the Lord to his own people, are mercy and peace.

3. Such a temper of mind will greatly contribute to our own inward peace. It will be an effectual preſervative from all unrighteous courſes, and unlawful, or even diſhonorable means of increaſing our worldly ſubſtance, and conſequently ſave us from the troubles or dangers to which men expoſe themſelves by ſuch practices. It will preſerve us from perplexing anxiety, and many uneaſy fears for futurity. It will bring us the near and ſure way to the greateſt of all earthly bleſſings—a contented mind.

Such will be the ſweet and delightful effects of depending upon God, and leaving it to him to furniſh our ſupplies as he ſees moſt convenient for us. Whoever can pray with the prophet—"give me neither poverty nor "riches, feed me with food convenient for me"—may be fully aſſured, that his deſire ſhall be gratified, as it is perfectly agreeable to the will of God.

I conclude with reading to you our Saviour's exhortation on this ſubject—"Therefore, I ſay unto you, take no "thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall "drink; nor yet for your body, what ye ſhall put on. Is "not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? "Behold the fowls of the air; for they ſow not, neither "do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly "Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than "they? But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and his "righteouſneſs; and all theſe things ſhall be added unto "you."

The DANGER of PROSPERITY.

SERMON 29.

Proverbs xxx. 9.

Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? Or, lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.—

I PROCEED now to conſider the arguments by which the prophet enforces his wiſe and well conceived prayer. Theſe, in connexion with the two branches of the prayer, ſtand thus; "Give me not riches, leſt I be full "and deny thee, and ſay, who is the Lord? And give "me not poverty, leſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the "name of my God in vain." If Agur's prayer is conceived in the moſt modeſt and humble terms, the reaſons, with which he ſupports it, are every way becoming a truly wiſe and good man. You ſee in them a prevailing concern for the honor and glory of God, and his own preſervation in the paths of piety and virtue. You ſee in them a humble ſenſe of his own weakneſs, and the danger of temptation; he, therefore, deſires to be placed in ſuch a ſtate of life, as will expoſe him to the feweſt trials. An excellent diſpoſition this, and highly worthy of our imitation. How happy would it be for us all, if a deſire to pleaſe God and preſerve our integrity, lay always neareſt

our hearts, and had a conſtant and commanding influence on every ſtep we took in our journey through life.

Neither riches nor poverty are bad in themſelves. Neither of them is any recommendation, or hinderance to the favor of God, who is no reſpecter of perſons—there are good and bad in all ranks. Men may be rich and yet pious, or poor, yet ſtrictly juſt and honeſt. It is, I confeſs, often done, yet it is highly criminal to look upon all that are rich in this world as profane; and it would be equally ſo to look upon all that are poor as deſtitute of integrity. Yet it is undeniable, that, from the corruption of the human heart, theſe two extremes do often become ſtrong temptations to the particular ſins mentioned in the text; which we ſhall now conſider ſeparately, in the order in which they lie in the paſſage before us.

"Give me not riches, leſt I be full and deny thee, and "ſay, who is the Lord?"

As to the fact, that riches do often lead to profanity and contempt of God, experience, and the ſtate of the world prove it in a manner too plain to be denied. We not only ſee that thoſe, who are born and educated from their infancy in the higher ranks of life, are moſt prone to neglect the duties of religion; but thoſe who, from a low or mean condition, are remarkably raiſed in the courſe of Providence, do often change their temper with their ſtate, and ſhow the unhappy influence of riches in leading them to a forgetfulneſs of God. Are there not ſome, who were regularly in God's houſe when they but barely ſubſiſted, who have not time for it now, when they are buſy and wealthy? Are there not ſome families, where the worſhip of God was conſtant and regular in early life, while they were undiſtinguiſhed, and now it is no more to be heard in their ſumptuous palaces and elegant apartments? Shall I ſay, that any worm of the earth is become too conſiderable to fall down before the omnipotent Jehovah?

I may add, as being of great importance in the preſent ſubject, that ſuch changes do often take place gradually and inſenſibly, very much contrary to men's own expectation; ſo that we really do not know ourſelves, nor can we determine before trial, how far we would reſiſt or yield

to the force of temptation. The prophet Eliſha foretold to Hazael, the cruelties he would be guilty of when raiſed to an higher ſtation; to which he replied with diſdain and abhorrence; "What, is thy ſervant a dog, that he ſhould "do this great thing? And Eliſha anſwered, the Lord "hath ſhewed me that thou ſhalt be king over Syria."—The conduct of the children of Iſrael in their proſperity, is but an emblem of the general conduct of the children of men. "But Jeſhurun waxed fat, and kicked. Thou "art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered "with fatneſs: Then he forſook God which made him, "and lightly eſteemed the rock of his ſalvation."

What hath been ſaid might be ſufficient to ſhew the propriety of the prophet's prayer; for if ſuch hath been often, or generally, the influence of worldly greatneſs upon other men, why ſhould any be ſo confident as to preſume it would be otherwiſe with themſelves? But perhaps it may afford matter of uſeful inſtruction, to inquire a little further into the ſubject—to trace the cauſes of this effect, and ſhew how and why riches become an inducement to irreligion and profaneneſs, for this will beſt enable us to apply the remedy. When I ſpeak of examining the cauſes of this effect, I confeſs that no reaſon can be given for it, but what reflects great diſhonor upon human nature in its preſent ſtate. Were we to judge of the matter by the dictates of ſound reaſon, we ſhould naturally expect to find it directly contrary. God is the author of every bleſſing which men poſſeſs, and his gifts ſhould lead us to gratitude and acknowledgment. It ſeems natural then to ſuppoſe, that thoſe who are moſt highly favored in the courſe of Providence, ſhould diſcover the greateſt ſenſe of obligation, and be ready to make every dutiful return. One would think that though the poor ſhould be impatient, ſurely the rich will be content and thankful. Is not this reaſonable? Had any of you beſtowed many favors upon others, would you not expect that their gratitude ſhould bear ſome proportion to the number and value of benefits received? Had any of them been remarkably diſtinguiſhed from the reſt, would you not expect from them the moſt inviolable fidelity and attachment? Strange,

that our conduct ſhould be ſo directly oppoſite in the returns we make for the goodneſs of our Maker! That thoſe who are diſtinguiſhed from others by the largeſt poſſeſſions, and the greateſt fulneſs of all temporal mercies, ſhould be the moſt prone to wickedneſs of all ſorts; but eſpecially, that they ſhould be peculiarly inclined to forgetfulneſs and contempt of God! Yet ſo it is in truth. But however diſhonorable it is to human nature, let us ſearch into it a little, and perhaps we may diſcover the cauſe of impiety in perſons in affluent circumſtances, and the danger the prophet would avoid, by attending to the following obſervations:

1. An eaſy and affluent fortune affords the means, not only of pampering our bodies, but of gratifying all our luſts and appetites. They are as ſtrong probably in perſons of inferior ſtations, but Providence has rendered the gratification more difficult, and in ſome caſes impoſſible. Many work through neceſſity, who would be as idle and ſlothful as any, but for the fear of want. Theſe will be the firſt and readieſt to reproach the rich, and call them idle drones, who revel in that abundance for which they never toiled; and to put to their own credit that which is wholly owing to the reſtraints under which they are laid. Many are generally ſober, becauſe they cannot afford the charges of intemperance, who want nothing but the means, to riot in the moſt brutal ſenſuality. But to perſons of great wealth, the objects of deſire are always placed in full view, and are evidently within their reach: ſo that the temptation has uncommon force, and few are able entirely to reſiſt it.

2. The indulgence of pleaſure inſenſibly induces a habit, and leads men to place their happineſs in ſuch enjoyments. Habit you know is very powerful, and while the habit acquires ſtrength, the power of reſiſtance is gradually weakened. Theſe gratifications conſume ſo much time, that there is little left to reflect upon God, and our relation to him. I reckon it none of the leaſt temptations to perſons of high rank, that not only their ſelf-indulgence, but the attendance and obſequiouſneſs of others, ſo en-

groſſes their attention, and waſtes their time, that they have few opportunities of calm and ſober reflection; or at leaſt, can eaſily eſcape from it, and take refuge in company and amuſement. Add to this, that a great variety of ſenſible objects and enjoyments render the mind, not only leſs attentive to things of a ſpiritual nature, but indeed, leſs able to underſtand them.

3. Obſerve further, that when the better part is thus neglected, and no care taken of the cultivation of the mind, every vice will ſpring and ſhoot up in the ſoul, as briars and thorns do upon uncultivated ground. Sin, my brethren, is natural to us; it is the produce of the ſoil; if it is not deſtroyed, it will not die; if it is but neglected, it will thrive. Now when ever perſons fall under the power of vice, they begin firſt to excuſe, and then to vindicate it. Thoſe who are under the government of luſt, ſoon find it would be their intereſt that there was no ſuch thing as religion and virtue. Whatever we wiſh, we are eaſily led to believe to be true. Looſe and atheiſtical principles then find a ready admittance, and are ſwallowed down greedily. This is a ſhort ſketch of the ſteps by which people in affluent and eaſy circumſtances, are often led to deny God, and to ſay: "What is the Almighty that we ſhould "ſerve him, and what profit ſhould we have if we pray "unto him?" Looſe principles are, at firſt, more frequently the effect, than the cauſe of looſe practices; but when once they have taken deep root, and obtained full dominion in the heart, they have a dreadful and fatal influence on the devoted victim.

But, my brethren, I find a ſtrong inclination to make another remark, though perhaps it may be thought of too refined and abſtract a nature. It is, that the danger of affluence in leading to contempt of God, ariſes from the nature of all ſin as ſuch. The original and firſt ſin of man, was plainly affecting independence. They deſired and expected to be as gods, knowing good and evil. And ſtill ſin properly conſiſts in withdrawing our allegiance from, and throwing off our dependance upon God, and giving, as it were, that eſteem, love and ſervice to

ourſelves, in one ſhape or another, that is due only to him.

Now obſerve, that affluence nouriſhes this miſtake, and ſuffering kills it. The more every thing abounds with us, the more our will is ſubmitted to, and our inclinations gratified on every ſubject; the more we look upon ourſelves as independent, and forget our obligations to God. Whereas, on the other hand, diſappointments and calamities open our blind eyes, and make us remember what we are. Was not the proud monarch of Babylon inſpired with this deluſive ſenſe of independence, when he expreſſed himſelf thus: "At the end of twelve months "he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. "The king ſpake and ſaid, is not this great Babylon, that "I have built for the houſe of the kingdom, by the might "of my power, and for the honor of my majeſty?" But mark the more powerful word of the King of kings.— "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a "voice from heaven, ſaying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to "thee it is ſpoken, the kingdom is departed from thee!" That this is the proper ſource of worldly greatneſs, may be ſeen in the temper ſuch perſons uſually acquire and ſettle in, which is pride, inſolence and contempt of others. Nay, it appears ſtill more clearly in ſome few inſtances, in which the intoxication comes to its height, and the poor deluded mortal literally aſpired to be conſidered and treated as God. It may ſeem incredible, but we have the moſt authentic evidence that hiſtory can afford, that ſome men have demanded and received divine worſhip. This was the caſe, not only with Alexander the Great, who was really an illuſtrious prince, but with ſome of the later Roman emperors, who were the meaneſt and baſeſt of all men. No wonder then, that proſperity makes men neglect God, when it prompts them to ſit down upon his throne, and rob him of the ſervice of his other ſubjects.

Before I proceed to the other part of the prophet's argument, ſuffer me to make a few remarks, for the improvement of what has been already ſaid, And,

1. See hence the great malignity and deceitfulneſs of ſin. It hardly appears more ſtrongly from any circum-

ſtance, than that which has been the ſubject of this diſcourſe, viz. that the gifts of God, in the courſe of his Providence, are ſo far from exciting our gratitude, in proportion to their number and value, that on the contrary, thoſe who *receive most* are uſually *most profane*. They make his favors inſtruments of rebellion againſt him, and return contempt for his indulgence, and hatred for his love.

Let us not take occaſion from this to gratify our own envy, by particular or perſonal reproach againſt thoſe who are great, or have become rich amongſt ourſelves; but let us act a far wiſer and juſter part, and be humbled for the ſinfulneſs of our nature, and warned of the deceitfulneſs of ſin. We may feel the ſeeds of this diſpoſition in us all. You find the wiſe man charging a ſimilar ingratitude upon man in general. "Becauſe ſentence againſt "an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the "heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil." And do you not obſerve every day, nay, has it is not turned into a proverb, that we think light of our mercies, ſpiritual and temporal, when they are common and abundant? And what is the true and proper interpretation of this, but that the greater God's goodneſs is to us, commonly the leſs is our gratitude to him?

2. Let me beſeech you to make a wiſe improvement of the advantages you enjoy over one another. Let them excite in you a holy emulation to teſtify your ſenſe of ſuperior bleſſings, by ſuperior piety and uſefulneſs. Do you excel others in any reſpect? Are you ſucceſsful in trade? Have you riſen to reputation? Are you exalted to offices of dignity? Are you endowed with capacity of mind? Can you remember the time when thoſe were your equals who are now your inferiors? Do not look with inſolence upon others, making odious, and perhaps unjuſt compariſons. Do not ſwell in pride and ſelf-complacence, as if by your own power you had made yourſelves to differ, but rather look the other way, to God, who is the maker both of rich and poor, and pray that your thankfulneſs and duty to him may exceed that of the poor man, as much as his liberality to you exceeds what he has thought pro-

per to beſtow upon him. This affords me an opportunity of relating a little piece of private hiſtory, that happened in Great Britain, and appears to me very worthy of remembrance, and very conducive to the ends of edification.

A gentleman of very conſiderable fortune, but a ſtranger to either perſonal or family religion, one evening took a ſolitary walk through a part of his own grounds. He happened to come near to a mean hut, where a poor man with a numerous family lived, who earned their bread by daily labor. He heard a voice pretty loud and continued.—Not knowing what it was, curioſity prompted him to liſten. The man, who was piouſly diſpoſed, happened to be at prayer with his family. So ſoon as he could diſtinguiſh the words, he heard him giving thanks with great affection to God, for the goodneſs of his providence, in giving them food to eat, and raiment to put on, and in ſupplying them with what was neceſſary and comfortable in the preſent life. He was immediately, no doubt, by divine power, ſtruck with aſtoniſhment and confuſion, and ſaid to himſelf, does this poor man, who has nothing but the meaneſt fare, and that purchaſed by ſevere labor, give thanks to God for his goodneſs to himſelf and family, and I, who enjoy eaſe and honor, and every thing that is grateful and deſirable, have hardly ever bent my knee, or made any acknowledgment to my Maker and preſerver. It pleaſed God that this providential occurrence proved the mean of bringing him to a real and laſting ſenſe of God and religion.

Let all perſons in health, quiet and plentiful circumſtances, learn from the preceding diſcourſe, what it is they ought clearly to guard againſt.—Pride, ſecurity, forgetfulneſs of God, are peculiarly incident to that ſtate. "Lo "this," ſaith the Lord to Jeruſalem, "was the iniquity "of thy ſiſter Sodom, pride, fulneſs of bread, and abun- "dance of idleneſs was in her, and in her daughters, "neither did ſhe ſtrengthen the hand of the poor and "needy." A ſerious reflection on the obligation ſuch lie under to God for what they have received in their continued dependance upon him, and the inſtability of all

earthly things, would ſave them from the hurtful influence of worldly proſperity. To enforce this, I ſhall only read the apoſtolic charge to Timothy. "Charge them that "are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, "nor truſt in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who "giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, "that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, "willing to communicate; laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that "they may lay hold on eternal life."

THE DANGER OF ADVERSITY.

SERMON 30.

PROVERBS XXX. 9.

Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

I PROCEED now to consider the argument by which the prophet urges the second branch of his request, which, in connexion, runs thus—"Give me not poverty, "lest I be poor and steal." Having not only explained the general principle that runs through the whole of this subject, but also very particularly pointed out the dangers attending an opulent and wealthy state, I shall endeavor to do the same thing with respect to a state of poverty and straitness. While I attempt this, I am sincerely sorry that there is so much propriety in the subject; and that it is so well suited to the circumstances of the inhabitants of this place. You see the prophet considers the great and general temptation to which the poor are exposed, to be dishonest, by using fraudulent means of relieving their wants, or bettering their condition. You see also, he considers this temptation in its progress, not only inclining them to act unjustly, but sometimes proceeding to the terrible degree of concealing or supporting the fraud by falsehood, and perhaps at last by perjury or false swearing; "lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God "in vain."

Let us firſt conſider a little the matter of fact, as it appears in experience, and then a few of its principal cauſes.

As to the firſt of theſe, ſhall I be afraid to affirm, that extreme poverty often inclines perſons to diſhoneſty and fraud? Will it be thought harſh and ſevere to thoſe already ſufficiently depreſſed! As I would not ſeem to ſtand in this place, and flatter the pride of the greateſt and moſt eminent of my fellow-ſinners, ſo neither will I diſſemble the truth from a falſe compaſſion for the poor. This would indeed be doing them the greateſt poſſible injury; it would be treating them, from miſtaken tenderneſs, as the rich are often treated from the fear or partiality of thoſe who are about them; foſtering their ſelf-deceit, and not ſuffering them to hear the moſt ſalutary truths, becauſe they are not pleaſing to the fleſh.

It is undoubtedly matter of experience, that great poverty makes many take unjuſt and unwarrantable methods of procuring relief. Not only ſo, but they ſeem often diſpoſed to juſtify and defend them, as if they had a title to rectify the miſtakes of Providence, in the diſtribution of worldly poſſeſſions. This, in the event, receives great encouragement from ſome who ſeem to have imbibed a general falſe principle, and act upon it, both in their own conduct, and in their judgment of others. In the diviſion of controverſy, or dividing diſputed property, when one party is, or is ſuppoſed to be rich, and in eaſy circumſtances, and the other poor, and in a mean condition, they think that inſtead of acting according to ſtrict juſtice, the advantage ſhould always be made to fall to the poorer ſide. This conduct is conſidered by ſome, not only as lawful, but as laudable. It is however a falſe principle, and is condemned in ſcripture, which ſays, "Neither "ſhalt thou countenance a poor man in his cauſe." It may be thought, perhaps, that the other is the more common and dangerous partiality, and probably it is ſo; yet this alſo is blame-worthy, and when followed out, as I am afraid it too often is, muſt involve numbers unawares in the guilt of ſtealing; for when they have once laid down this rule, that the poor have ſome claim upon the rich,

they are ready to apply it to their own caſe, and extend it very far. But in all matters of property, or right and wrong, whether a perſon is rich or poor, ought to be utterly out of the queſtion; the only thing to be conſidered is, what is juſt and lawful. The rich are indeed, in point of conſcience, bound to aſſiſt the poor; but this muſt be their own act; no perſon can take the ſmalleſt part of their property without their conſent, but he is guilty of an act of injuſtice, and violation of the law of God. No perſon has a right to make them generous and charitable againſt their wills, or to exerciſe their own generoſity and charity at their expence. This muſt be left to the Supreme Judge at the laſt day, who will ſay to them, "I was a ſtranger "and ye took me not in, naked and ye clothed me not, "ſick and in priſon and ye viſited me not." But what will give us the moſt diſtinct view of the influence of poverty, as a temptation, is the too frequent conduct of thoſe who are reduced from what was once their ſtate, to poverty or debt, by misfortunes or extravagance, or miſmanagement of their affairs. The temptation of poverty is not by far ſo great to thoſe in the meaneſt ranks of life, whoſe income, though ſmall, is not very diſproportionate to what hath always been their condition; as to thoſe who are reduced from a higher to a lower ſtate—The few, who in ſuch a ſituation preſerve their integrity inviolated, and their ſincerity of ſpeech unſuſpected, deſerve the higheſt honor. Nay, I am perſuaded that, bad as the world is, every perſon in reduced circumſtances, would meet with compaſſion and aſſiſtance, if all about him were ſenſible that he had neither loſt his ſubſtance by neglect, nor waſted it by riot, nor concealed it by fraud. But though we cannot help aſcribing ſome meaſure of what is laid to the charge of perſons in this unhappy ſtate, to the rage and reſentment of thoſe who have ſuffered by them; yet alas, there is too great reaſon to affirm, that they are too often guilty of prevarication and fraud, the ſins mentioned in the text.

I will dwell no longer upon the fact, but will conſider a little the reaſons of it, which will directly ſerve to promote the deſign of this diſcourſe, by exciting men to con-

cern and solicitude, as well as pointing out the proper means of avoiding the temptation. The general reason of this, to be sure, is obvious to every body, that persons in poverty, being strongly solicited by the appetites common to all men, and not having of their own wherewith to gratify their desires, are tempted to lay hold of the property of others. They grudge to see that others have the enjoyments from which they are debarred; and since they cannot have them in a lawful, make bold to seize them in an unlawful way. But this I do not insist on, that I may mention one or two particular reasons, which will suggest suitable exhortations to duty.

1. The first I shall mention, is ignorance. This is peculiarly applicable to those in the lowest ranks of life. Through poverty they are not so well instructed as they ought to be, in the principles of religion, and the great rules of duty. An ignorant state is almost always a state of security.—Their consciences are less tender, and they are less sensible of the great evil of prevarication and fraud. I am obliged, in fidelity, to say, that in the private inspection of my charge, though I have found some instances both of poverty and sickness borne with the most pious resignation, there are also some whose condition might move the hardest heart, living in the most sordid poverty, grossly ignorant, and, at the same time, so dispirited, so slothful, or so proud, that they will do little to obtain knowledge for themselves, or communicate it to their children. Many will not attend upon the public means of instruction, because they cannot appear in such a decent garb as they could wish; and for the same reason they keep their children from them, till they contract such habits of idleness and vice, that they come out into the world without principle, obstinate and intractible. Is not the duty here very plain? All such should exert themselves to obtain the knowledge of the things which belong to their peace. They should neither be unwilling nor ashamed to make application for supply; and even the coarsest raiment should not hinder them from appearing in the house of God. Thus they will find acceptance with him, if they worship him in the beauty of holiness, preferable to those

who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and their hearts are after their covetouſneſs.

2. Another great reaſon why poverty becomes a temptation to fraud is, that they are introduced to it inſenſibly, and led on by degrees. The ſin ſteals upon them by little and little. People involved in their circumſtances, to get rid of importunity and ſolicitation, make promiſes, more of what they hope or wiſh, than of what they are able to do. Neceſſity ſerves as an excuſe for their failing to their own minds, and thus they are gradually brought into a breach of ſincerity, and proceed from lower to higher degrees of falſhood. Little arts of evaſion are firſt made uſe of, and doubtful practices are entered upon. One ſin ſeems neceſſary to ſtrengthen or conceal another, till at laſt the groſſeſt fraud, and ſometimes perjury itſelf, cloſes the unhappy ſcene. I have read an excellent obſervation, that there is hardly ſuch a thing as a ſingle ſin; they are always to be found in cluſters. I am ſure, this holds in a particular manner as to ſins of injuſtice. They are ſo interwoven and connected together, that you cannot receive any one without being obliged to admit the reſt. This is one great branch of the deceitfulneſs of ſin in general; with a view to which the apoſtle ſays, "But exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin."

3. I only mention one other reaſon of poverty being a temptation to fraud, viz. that in time it deſtroys the ſenſe of ſhame. I am not ignorant, that a ſenſe of ſhame, which is nothing elſe but a fear of the cenſure of others, neither is, nor ought to be the main principle of a good man's actions. But as there is no other principle at all in many, ſo it is a good aſſiſtant, and corroborative when juſtly directed; but now, through the corrupt maxims of the world, poverty is ſo much the object of contempt, and thoſe who are in this ſtate, meet every day with ſo many marks of neglect from all, that before their condition is known, they will do almoſt any thing to conceal it, and after it is known, they become in time ſo deſtitute of ſhame, that they are under no further reſtraint.

From this particular branch of the subject, let me put you in mind,

1. What reason many have to be thankful to the God of life, who hath given them their daily provision, if not in all the abundance of immense riches, yet in fulness and sufficiency. An humble, thankful disposition is not only your duty, in return for the divine bounty, but is itself the richest and sweetest ingredient in all temporal mercies. —It is that, indeed, which makes them mercies.—Envious persons do not taste what they have, their evil eye being fixed on what they cannot obtain. Things in this respect are just what they seem to be. Our comforts are as we are enabled to relish them. The same possessions which are despised by the impatient or ambitious, are a treasure and abundance to the humble and grateful.

2. If poverty is a temptation, it ought to be an argument to all to avoid it, or seek deliverance from it by lawful means. Apply yourselves with steadiness and perseverance to the duties of your calling, that you may provide things honest in the sight of all men. It is a duty of the law, and of the gospel; and it hath this promise, in general, annexed to it, that "the hand of the diligent "maketh rich." Read, I beseech you, that vast treasure of useful instruction, the book of Proverbs; where you will meet with many excellent counsels and wise observations upon this subject. Of these I shall mention at present, but two passages, selected both for the soundness of the instruction, and the beauty of the illustration. "Go "to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; "which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth "her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the "harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When "wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? So shall thy poverty "come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed "man." And again; "I went by the field of the slothful, "and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; "and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles "had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof "was broken down."

3. Are any of you poor and reduced in your circumſtances, ſet a double watch upon your conduct, and earneſtly pray that God may preſerve you from fraud and diſingenuity of every kind. Rather ſuffer yourſelves to be ſtripped of every thing, and apply to the charity of others, which is not ſinful, and ought not to be ſhameful, than take any diſhoneſt methods of bettering your ſtate. O melancholy thought, that many, when they become deſperate in their circumſtances, become alſo deſperate in their courſes, and drown the reflection of their conſciences in ſlothfulneſs and ſenſuality! Sincerity, integrity, patience and ſobriety in a ruined fortune are doubly eminent; at leaſt, whatever they may be in the ſight of the world, they are honorable and precious in the ſight of God, and of all good men.

Before concluding, ſuffer me to make one or two reflections on the ſubject in general; the ſeveral parts of which I have now explained. And,

1. On what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, I would graft this important leſſon; that you ſhould not only ſtudy to preſerve yourſelves from ſin, but from all ſuch circumſtances of temptation as are dangerous to human conſtancy. This was the very ground of the prayer of the prophet in my text, and is the ſubſtance of the reaſons he aſſigns for his requeſt. We are taught the ſame thing in the ſtrongeſt manner, by the ſeveral inſtances of human frailty, and the folly of preſumptuous confidence, recorded in ſcripture. "Now all theſe things happened unto "them for enſamples, and they are written for our admo- "nition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he ſtandeth take heed "leſt he fall." We are alſo taught the ſame thing by him who knew what was in man, as he has given us directions in the form of prayer which he taught his diſciples, to ſay, Lord, "lead us not into temptation."

Are you really unwilling to do evil, you will be concerned to keep yourſelves out of the way of every ſolicitation to it. This is conſtantly the effect of a judicious and ſolid piety, and thoſe who act otherwiſe ſhew that they either have no real goodneſs, or that they are very

weak Christians, and little acquainted either with themselves, or this present evil world.

2. You may learn how necessary it is, that you should look for the divine assistance and direction, to avoid the temptation of every state of life. We are truly of ourselves unequal to the trials with which we are surrounded. Not that there is any thing unjust or oppressive in the measures of Providence; but because it seems good to our Maker, to oblige us to a constant dependance upon himself and his promised help. "But God is faithful, who will not suffer "you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with "the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may "be able to bear it."

The least temptation may prove too hard for us, if we neglect to apply for supreme aid; but in divine strength, we may bid defiance to the most formidable opposition. This temper is well exemplified and described by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians. "And he said unto me, "my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made "perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I ra-"ther glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ "may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in in-"firmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, "in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then "am I strong."

3. From what hath been said, you may see what an inseparable connexion there is between true religion and your employments and state in this present world. They have a mutual, strong, and constant influence upon one another. It is a fatal, though a common error to separate them; entirely to confine religion to the times and places of immediate worship, and suppose that it hath nothing to do with the maxims of trade and commerce, or other worldly callings. On the contrary, your impressions of things spiritual and eternal, will direct and regulate your views as to the present life; and your success or misfortunes in worldly schemes, will have a certain and visible effect upon your Christian conversation, and the state of your souls. Therefore, let them never be separated in your own views, and let them still be kept in their proper

order and subordination. Though the light and trivial use, not only of the name of God, but of scripture-language, is both sinful and dangerous; and though a forward ostentatious piety may sometimes look suspicious, yet it were to be wished we had more of a grave and habitual acknowledgment of God in all our ways. This was the language of the Patriarchs of old. In one of the former discourses upon this subject, I took notice of Jacob's prayer, when he set out for Padan-aram. See after the increase of his family, how he expresses himself in answer to his brother Esau. "And he lift up his eyes and saw "the women and children, and said, who are those with "thee? And he said the children which God hath graci-"ously given thy servant." See also the apostolical direction for the manner of projecting our future purposes.—"Go to now, ye that say to-day, or to-morrow, we will go "into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy "and sell, and get gain."

4. In the last place, let me beseech, in the tenderest manner, every one of you, rich and poor, to remember an approaching eternity. It will not be long till the honorable, and despised, the wealthy and the needy, the master and the servant, shall lie down in the dust. Lay hold of that covenant of peace which is ordered in all things and sure. Hear a great and constant truth. "What is a "man profited, though he should gain the whole world "and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in ex-"change for his soul?" How many a Lazarus is now in Abraham's bosom; and how many a rich man, that once lived delicately on earth, is at this moment tormented in hell-fire! The gospel of peace is now preached in your ears. Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved. I cannot promise that you shall be rich, but all things necessary are assured to you by the divine promise; food and raiment, support under trials, strength for duty, and in the world to come, everlasting rest.

On the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION of CHILDREN.

SERMON 31.

Preached in the Old Presbyterian Church in New-York, to a very numerous audience, on the evening of the second Sabbath in May, 1789.

MARK x. 13, 14, 15, 16.

And they brought young children unto him, that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

THERE are few things in which persons of reflection, in general, and especially those who fear God, are more agreed, than the importance of the rising generation; or, which is the true meaning of that expression, the importance of the instruction and government of youth.

This is a subject of great extent, and may also be taken up in a great variety of lights. I am one of those who think that it may, as well as many others, be, with much advantage, considered doctrinally; and that a clear view of divine truth upon every subject, will have the most powerful and happy influence, not only in directing our sentiments, but in governing our practice.

There is much to be ſeen of the proper glory of the Redeemer in this paſſage of ſcripture—His uſefulneſs—his attention to improve every ſeemingly accidental occurrence for the purpoſe of inſtruction, and his amiable condeſcenſion to all who humbly applied to Him, and tender feeling for their wants and weakneſſes. It appears from this paſſage, that the inhabitants about Jordan, where he then was, not only brought their ſick to be healed, as they did in moſt other places, but brought young children "that "he ſhould touch them." In Luke they are called infants; and in the latter end of the paſſage now read, it is ſaid, he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and bleſſed them; ſo that it is probable they were all of them of very early age, and ſome of them perhaps, literally what we call infants, who could not yet ſpeak or walk. I ſee not the leaſt foundation for what ſome commentators imagine, that they might labor under ſome diſorder, from which the parents ſuppoſed he would cure them: If this had been the intention, the diſciples would not, probably, have found any fault with it. The probability is, that the parents or relations of the children brought them, expecting that he would lay his hands on them—authoritatively bleſs them, and pray for them; from which they believed important benefits might be derived to them. The diſciples, we are told, "rebuked thoſe that brought them," ſuppoſing, doubtleſs, that it was an impertinent and unneceſſary interruption of their maſter, and that the children could receive no benefit at that early time of life; and who knows but, like the human wiſdom of later times, they might think the attempt ſuperſtitious as well as unneceſſary. However, our Lord was of a different opinion, and ſaid—"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and "forbid them not; for of ſuch is the kingdom of God."

Now the ſingle ſubject of this diſcourſe ſhall be to inquire, What is the import of this declaration? and, What we may underſtand our Saviour as affirming, when he ſays, of young children or infants, "of ſuch is the king-"dom of God?" After this, I will give ſuch advices as the truths that may be eſtabliſhed ſhall ſuggeſt, and as they ſeem to me moſt proper to enforce.

Let us then conſider what we may underſtand our Saviour as affirming, when he ſays of young children or infants, " of ſuch is the kingdom of God."

And, in the firſt place, we may underſtand by it, that children may be taken within the bond of God's covenant; become members of the viſible church, and, in conſequence, be *relatively* holy. I do not found the lawfulneſs of infant baptiſm on this paſſage alone, and mean to enter into no controverſy on the ſubject at this time; but, as it is clearly eſtabliſhed in other paſſages, it may well be underſtood here. At any rate ſo far as I have affirmed is undoubtedly certain, that they *may be* admitted within the bond of God's covenant. We know, that under the Old Teſtament, they received the ſign of circumciſion, which in the New Teſtament, is ſaid to be " a ſeal of the " righteouſneſs that is of faith." (Rom. iv. 11.) Many benefits may ariſe from this. As in the natural conſtitution of man, many advantages and diſadvantages are derived from parents upon the offspring, ſo in the moral conſtitution of divine grace, many bleſſings, ſpiritual and temporal, may be inherited from pious parents. Children are the ſubjects of prayer; and, of conſequence, within reach of the promiſe. The believer may juſtly hope for his ſeed dying in infancy, and in after life, many eventual providential mercies may be expected from that God who " ſheweth mercy to thouſands of generations of them that " love him."

It was uſual in the moſt ancient times, for aged or holy perſons to bleſs children formally. I do not recollect in ancient hiſtory, a more beautiful, or more tender ſcene, than that we have recorded, Gen. xlviii. 15. of the patriarch Jacob's bleſſing his grand-children, the ſons of Joſeph, when he was about to die—" And he bleſſed Joſeph and " ſaid, God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Iſaac, " did walk, the God which fed me all my life long to this " day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bleſs " the lads; and let my name be named upon them, " and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Iſaac: " And let them grow into a multitude in the midſt of the " earth." We are told by an ancient writer of the Chriſ-

tian church, that Ignatius, afterwards biſhop of Antioch, was one of thoſe children thus brought to Chriſt for his bleſſing; and there is no reaſon, that I know of, to oppoſe the tradition: For ſuppoſing him to have been an infant, or even from 2 to 5 years of age, it would make him only between 70 and 80 at the time of his martyrdom, in the year 108 from the birth of Chriſt.

2. The declaration "of ſuch is the kingdom of God," may be underſtood to imply, that children may, even in infancy, be the ſubjects of regenerating grace, and thereby become *really* holy. This is plain from the nature of the thing; for if they can carry the corrupt impreſſion of Adam's nature in their infant ſtate, there can be no doubt but they may be renewed after the image of him that created them. Almighty power can eaſily have acceſs to them, and can, in anſwer to prayers, as well as endeavors, form them for their Maker's ſervice. See what the prophet Iſaiah ſays, xxviii. 9. "Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? and whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine? "Thoſe that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from "the breaſts." Samuel was a child of prayer, and dedicated to God from his infant years, and it is ſaid of him, 1 Sam. ii. 26. "And the child Samuel grew, and was in "favor both with the Lord, and alſo with men." It is an expreſſion frequently to be found in pious writers, and among them that are far from denying the univerſal corruption of human nature, that ſome may be ſaid to be ſanctified from the womb—that is, that the time of their renovation may be beyond the reach both of underſtanding and memory; and this being certainly poſſible, may juſtly be conſidered as the object of deſire and the ſubject of prayer. Few, perhaps, have failed to obſerve, that ſome children diſcover upon the firſt dawn of reaſon, an amiable and tractable diſpoſition, and drink in ſpiritual inſtruction with deſire and delight; while others diſcover a frowardneſs and repugnance, that is with much difficulty, if at all, and ſometimes never, overcome.

3. I think this declaration implies, that children are much more early capable of receiving benefit, even by outward means, than is generally ſuppoſed. No doubt

the reaſon of the conduct of the diſciples was, that they ſuppoſed the children could receive no benefit. In this, from our Lord's anſwer, it is probable he thought them miſtaken. I will not enlarge on ſome refined remarks of perſons as diſtinguiſhed for learning as piety; ſome of whom have ſuppoſed, that they are capable of receiving impreſſions of deſire and averſion, and even of moral temper, particularly, of love or hatred, in the firſt year of their lives. I muſt, however, mention a remark of the juſtly celebrated M. Fenelon, archbiſhop of Cambray, becauſe the fact on which it is founded is undeniable, and the deduction from it important. He ſays, that 'before 'they are thought capable of receiving any inſtruction, or 'the leaſt pains are taken with them, they learn a lan-'guage.—Many children at four years of age can ſpeak 'their mother tongue, though not with the ſame accura-'cy or grammatical preciſion, yet with greater readineſs 'and fulneſs than moſt ſcholars do a foreign language 'after the ſtudy of a whole life.' If I were to enlarge upon this I might ſay, they not only diſcover their intellectual powers by connecting the idea with the ſign, but acquire many ſentiments of good and evil, right and wrong, in that early period of their life. Such is the attention of children, that they often ſeem to know their parents' tempers ſooner and better than they know their's, and to avail themſelves of that knowledge to obtain their deſires.

To apply this to our preſent ſubject, or rather the occaſion of it, allow me to obſerve, that the circumſtances of ſolemn tranſactions are often deeply engraven upon very young minds. It is not impoſſible that ſome of thoſe young children might recollect and be affected with the majeſty and condeſcenſion of Jeſus of Nazareth, and the impreſſion be attended with happy fruits. At any rate, as no doubt the parents would often relate the tranſaction to their children, this would be a kind of ſecondary memory, and have the ſame effect upon their ſentiments and conduct.

4. This declaration implies, that the earlieſt, in general, is the fitteſt and beſt time for inſtruction. This part

of the ſubject has been treated at full length by many writers in every age, I therefore ſhall ſay the leſs upon it—Only obſerve, That the importance of early inſtruction is written upon the whole ſyſtem of nature, and repeated in every page of the hiſtory of Providence. You may bend a young twig and make it receive almoſt any form: but that which has attained to maturity, and taken its ply, you will never bring into any other ſhape than that which it naturally bears. In the ſame manner thoſe habits which men contract in early life, and are ſtrengthened by time, it is next to impoſſible to change. Far be it from me to ſay any thing in oppoſition to the infinite power and abſolute ſovereignty of God; but let us alſo beware of conſidering theſe as oppoſed to the natural courſe of things, or the uſe and efficacy of means. We have many warnings upon this ſubject in ſcripture, where the recovery of an habitual and hardened ſinner, is likened to a natural impoſſibility, Jer. xiii. 23.—"Can the Ethiopian change his "ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good "that are accuſtomed to do evil." God will reſerve to himſelf his own abſolute ſovereignty, but it is at every ſinner's own peril if he preſume upon it and abuſe it.

5. This declaration of our Saviour—"Of ſuch is the "kingdom of God"—may imply, that, in fact, the real diſciples of Chriſt chiefly conſiſt of thoſe who are called in their earlier years. The viſible church of Chriſt is a numerous and mixed ſociety; but his myſtical body, conſiſting of real believers, I think we are warranted from this paſſage of ſcripture and others, as well as the analogy of faith, and the reaſon and nature of things, to ſuppoſe, conſiſts for the moſt part of thoſe who are called in infancy and youth. This is an important truth, and deeply fraught with inſtruction to all, of every rank. There are ſome called after a courſe of oppoſition to God, but they are few in compariſon; therefore the apoſtle Paul ſtyles himſelf—"One born out of due time." Perhaps experience and a deliberate view of the ſtate of the world, is ſufficient to prove this aſſertion. The inſtances of converſion in advanced life, are very rare: and when it ſeems to happen, it is perhaps moſt commonly the reſurrection

of thoſe ſeeds which were ſown in infancy, but had been long ſtifled by the violence of youthful paſſions, or the purſuits of ambition and the hurry of an active life. I have known ſeveral inſtances of the inſtructions, long neglected, of deceaſed parents, at laſt riſing up, aſſerting their authority, and producing the deepeſt penitence and real reformation. But my experiences furniſhes me with no example of one brought up in ignorance and ſecurity, after a long courſe of profaneneſs, turning, at the cloſe of life, to the ſervice of the living God. The moſt common caſe is, that the deep ſleep continues to the laſt, and, as the ſaying is, they die as they live; though in ſome inſtances, when the ſins have been of the groſſeſt kind, conſcience awakens at their going off the ſtage, and they ſeem, as it were, to begin the torments of hell with the terror of deſpair.

You will find in ſome practical writers an opinion, or ſentiment, that ſeems not ill-founded to the following purpoſe, 'Some are called at the eleventh hour that none 'may deſpair,' and there are few, that none may preſume. Others make a diſtinction, not without ground, as it ſeems founded upon the wiſdom and equity of the divine government; That when the goſpel comes to a people that had long ſitten in darkneſs, there may be numerous converts of all ages; but when the goſpel has been long preached in plenty and purity, and ordinances regularly adminiſtered, few but thoſe who are called in early life are ever called at all. A very judicious and pious writer, Mr. Richard Baxter, is of opinion, that in a regular ſtate of the church, and a tolerable meaſure of faithfulneſs and purity in its officers, family inſtruction and government are the uſual means of converſion, public ordinances of edification. This ſeems agreeable to the language of ſcripture; for we are told God hath ſet in the church "apoſtles, prophets, evangeliſts, paſtors and teachers," (not for converting ſinners, but) "for perfecting of the "ſaints for the work of the miniſtry, and the edifying of "the body of Chriſt." It ſeems to add further weight to this, that moſt of thoſe who are recorded in ſcripture as eminent for piety, were called in early life; and we know

not but it may have been the caſe with others, though not particularly mentioned: Thoſe I have in view, are Abraham, Moſes, Samuel, David, Solomon, Joſiah, Daniel, and the three Children, in the Old Teſtament, and in the New, John Baptiſt and John the beloved diſciple; of whom I may juſt obſerve, that no other reaſon has ever been given for the Saviour's diſtinguiſhing him by particular affection, but that he was the youngeſt of the twelve.

6. In the laſt place, this declaration implies that the comparative innocence of children is a leſſon to us, and an emblem of the temper and carriage of Chriſt's real diſciples. This inſtruction we are not left to infer for ourſelves. Our Lord has made the remark in the paſſage where the text lies, "Whoſoever ſhall not receive the "kingdom of God as a little child, ſhall not enter there-"in." This is directly levelled againſt the pride of ſelf-ſufficiency, and every rough and boiſterous paſſion. It is remarkable that the very ſame image is made uſe of in ſeveral paſſages of ſcripture. Thus, Matth. xviii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "At the ſame time came the diſciples unto Jeſus, "ſaying, Who is the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven? "And Jeſus called a little child unto him, and ſet him in "the midſt of them, and ſaid, verily I ſay unto you, ex-"cept ye be converted, and become as little children, ye "ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whoſo-"ever, therefore ſhall humble himſelf as this little child, "the ſame is greateſt in the kingdom of heaven." So alſo the apoſtle Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 20. "Brethren, be not "children in underſtanding: howbeit, in malice be ye "children, but in underſtanding be men:"—And further, 1 Peter ii. 1, 2. "Wherefore laying aſide all ma-"lice, and all guile, and hypocriſies, and envies, and "all evil ſpeakings,—as new-born babes, deſire the ſin-"cere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."—The graces of the ſpiritual life recommended to us by this beautiful image, are humility, gentleneſs, teachableneſs, ſincerity, and eaſineſs to be reconciled: all which are remarkable in young perſons, and are frequently loſt or vitiated by growing years.

I come now to make a practical improvement of the ſubject, which ſhall be confined to pointing out the duties ſuggeſted by the foregoing truths, as they are ſeverally incumbent on, 1. parents; 2. children; 3. every hearer of the goſpel.

1. Let us conſider the duties incumbent on parents. Is it ſo, that of children or infants the Redeemer ſaid, of ſuch is the kingdom of God? Then parents ſhould be (1) thankful. Thankfulneſs is a happy frame of ſpirit in itſelf, and powerfully reconciles the mind to difficult, and animates it to important duties. Be thankful then for the honor that is done you, for the truſt that is repoſed in you, and for the encouraging promiſe of God to aſſiſt and accept of you in the diſcharge of it. "Children are the "gift of God, and the fruit of the womb is his reward." I cannot eaſily figure to myſelf any greater earthly bleſſing than to have children to be the objects of your care and diligence while you live, and to inherit your name and ſubſtance, when you yourſelves muſt, in the courſe of nature, go off the ſtage. And is it a little honor to be intruſted with the care of theſe rational creatures of God, born for immortality, and whoſe preſent peace and future welfare depend ſo much on your conduct? Are you not called to prepare members for the church of Chriſt?—"for of ſuch is his kingdom;" and however important the miniſtry of the goſpel is (which I ſhould be the laſt to detract from) you may know, that it is out of a miniſter's power to ſpeak to the underſtanding of thoſe who are not prepared by previous inſtruction. But above all, how thankful ſhould you be for the encouragement given you to bring your children to the Saviour, and the promiſe of his bleſſing. "He took them up in his arms, laid "his hands on them and bleſſed them." Fathers! Mothers! What ground of praiſe to the condeſcending Saviour!

(2.) Be early and diligent in inſtruction. This is the great and ſubſtantial evidence you are called to give of your thankfulneſs for the mercy. You have heard that children are much more early capable of receiving be-

nefit by outward means than is commonly ſuppoſed: Let not, therefore, the devil and the world be too far beforehand with you, in poſſeſſing their fancy, engaging their affections, and miſleading their judgment. Is it a fable, or do I ſpeak truth when I ſay, many children learn to ſwear before they learn to pray. It is indeed affecting to a ſerious mind, to hear children liſping out ill-pronounced oaths, or ſcurrilous and ſcolding abuſe, or even impurities which they do not underſtand; ſo that the firſt ſentiments they form, and the firſt words they utter, are thoſe of impiety, malice, or obſcenity. Nay I have ſeen children in their mother's arms actually taught to ſcold, by uttering angry ſounds, before they could ſpeak one word with diſtinctneſs. It is wholly impoſſible for me here to introduce a ſyſtem of directions as to the method of early inſtruction; this muſt be learned elſewhere and at another time; but I mean to impreſs your minds with a ſenſe of the importance and neceſſity of the duty, and I will add, the *efficacy* of it. Remember the connection between the duty and the promiſe—"Train up a child in "the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not de-"part from it." I knew a pious and judicious miniſter, who affirmed, that we did not give credit to that part of God's word if we did not believe the certainty of the promiſe, as well as the obligation of the duty; he was of opinion, that every parent, when he ſeemed to fail, ſhould conclude that he himſelf had been undutiful, and not that God had been unfaithful.

(3.) Be circumſpect and edifying in your example. All the arguments that preſs the former exhortation, apply with the ſame, perhaps I may ſay, with double force to this. Example is itſelf the moſt powerful and ſucceſsful inſtruction; and example is neceſſary to give meaning and influence to all other inſtruction. This is one of the oldeſt maxims upon the ſubject of education;—The Roman ſatyriſt ſays, "Nil dictu viſuve fœdum hæc "limina tangat intra quæ puer eſt." Let nothing baſe be ſeen or heard within theſe walls in which a child is. And if children naturally form their ſentiments, habits

and manners, by imitation of others in general, how much more powerful muſt be the example of parents, who are every hour in their ſight, whom nature teaches them, and whom duty obliges them to love, and when it comes recommended by the continual intercourſe, and the endearing ſervices that flow from that intimate relation.

(4.) Laſtly, parents are taught here perſeverance and importunity in prayer. This, indeed, is an important thing upon every ſubject of our requeſts to God. Our Saviour ſpoke a parable on purpoſe to teach men, that they ſhould pray and not faint, Luke xviii. 1. And if we are called to believe, that "if we aſk any thing agree-"able to his will, he heareth us," what more agreeable to his will than frequent and importunate prayer for the temporal and ſpiritual happineſs of children—What a ſupport this to the faith of prayer. You ought, at the ſame time, to remember that, as the prophet Jeremiah ſays, "it is good for a man to hope and quietly to wait "for the ſalvation of God." The anſwer of prayer may come at a much greater diſtance than we are apt to look for it. There is a remarkable anecdote handed down to us, reſpecting the famous St. Auguſtine. He was the ſon of an eminently pious woman, whoſe name was Monica, yet he was in his youth very looſe and diſorderly. One of his fellow-citizens, it is ſaid, ſeeing him paſs along the ſtreet, reflected upon him with great ſeverity, as a diſgrace to ſociety; but another made anſwer, that he was not without hopes of him after all, for he thought it next to impoſſible that the ſon of ſo many prayers ſhould periſh.—And we know, that in fact, he became in due time one of the moſt eminent champions for evangelical truth. There is not the leaſt doubt that many prayers, and eſpecially of this kind, may have their anſwer and accompliſhment after the believer that offered them has been many years ſleeping in the duſt.

2. The truths above illuſtrated, ſuggeſt important advices to children, that is, to ſuch young perſons as are able to underſtand and apply them. (1.) Preſerve a tenderneſs of heart, and be thankful that you are not yet

hardened by habitual guilt, nor ſentenced to perpetual barrenneſs by the judgment of a righteous God. Eſteem, embrace, improve the precious but flying ſeaſon. Hearken to the inſtructions of parents; the admonitions of paſtors, the leſſons of providence, and the dictates of God's holy ſpirit ſpeaking by the conſcience. Think of the amiableneſs of early piety in the ſight of men; and its acceptableneſs in the ſight of God—"I love them that "love me," ſays he by his prophet; "and they that ſeek "me early ſhall find me."

(2.) Be not ſatisfied with, or truſt in outward privileges. If you are the children of pious parents, who have lived near to God; if you have been favored with early inſtruction, unleſs theſe advantages are improved, they will not plead for, but againſt you, at the great day. This is the dictate both of ſcripture and reaſon, "to "whomſoever much is given, of them much will be re-"quired." There is a common ſaying, that is neither agreeable to truth nor experience, and yet ſometimes obtains belief in a blinded world, that the children of good people are as bad as any: as if early education, which is of ſo much influence in learning every thing elſe, ſhould have no effect in religion. On the contrary, where do we expect to find pious youth, but in pious families, or ſober and induſtrious youth, but in ſober and induſtrious families? I ſhould call that man prudent in the conduct of life, who in the choice of a ſervant, an apprentice, or a partner in buſineſs, would pay almoſt as much attention to the blood and parentage, as to the perſon with whom he was to be immediately connected. But if we take notice of what probably gave occaſion to the miſtake, viz. that the wicked children of pious parents are the worſt of any, it is a truth of the utmoſt moment, and eaſily accounted for. They burſt aſunder the ſtrongeſt ties, they are under the unhappy neceſſity of maſtering conſcience by high-handed wickedneſs, and commonly come to ſpeedy and deſerved ruin: "He that "being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, ſhall ſuddenly "be deſtroyed, and that without remedy."

(3.) Do not ſatisfy yourſelves with a name to live, while you are dead. Though ſome young perſons religiouſly educated, by falling into diſſolute ſociety, become open profligates, there are others who retain the form without the life of religion: Therefore, if nature hath given you amiable diſpoſitions; if theſe have been cultivated by a pious and prudent education; if you feel the reſtraint of natural conſcience; if you are deſirous of public praiſe, or afraid of public ſhame, do not neglect any of theſe preſervatives from ſin; but yet endeavor to obtain, and ſee that you be governed by a principle ſuperior to them all, the hope of final acceptance with God through Chriſt. Aſk of him to give you a new heart, and a new ſpirit, to "create you a-new in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, "which God hath before ordained, that we ſhould walk in "them."

In the laſt place, this ſubject ſuggeſts ſome important inſtructions to the hearers of the goſpel in general. (1.) Loſe no time in providing for your great and beſt intereſt. Every argument that tends to ſhew the importance of early piety, may be applied, with equal or greater force, to ſhew the danger of delay in more advanced years. What is wiſe or amiable in youth, is neceſſary to thoſe who are nearer their journey's end. But conſidering myſelf as ſpeaking to profeſſing Chriſtians, what I would earneſtly adviſe you, is, to apply the principles above laid down, to particular purpoſes, as well as to your general conduct. If conſcience or providence has pointed out to you any thing that you may do to advantage, either for yourſelves or others, loſe no time in ſetting about it, becauſe you do not know how little time may be yours: So ſays the wiſe man, Ecc. ix. 10. "Whatſoever thy hand "findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no "work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in the "grave whither thou goeſt."

(2.) Do not forget the improvement of this ſubject, which our Saviour himſelf has pointed out; imitate the temper of children; learn to be humble and teachable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated. Both watch and pray againſt all violent attachments, rude and boiſterous paſ-

ſions, and deep rooted reſentment. Obſerve how the little lambs lay down their reſentment, and forget their quarrels. Under this particular, it is proper to recommend a decency of deportment, and a contempt of all vanity and affectation, as well as ſimplicity and ſincerity of ſpeech, and a contempt of all artifice and refinement. The apoſtle has given an excellent deſcription of this, 2 Cor. i. 12. "For our rejoicing is this, "the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity "and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by "the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the "world."

(3.) Set a good example before others in general, but eſpecially young perſons. The old rule, *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia*, ought to be pondered as well as recollected. It is of much importance what our viſible conduct is, at all times, and in all places, becauſe we continually contribute to form each others tempers and habits; but greater caution is neceſſary in preſence of young perſons, both becauſe they are moſt prone to imitation, and becauſe they have the leaſt judgment to make proper diſtinctions, or to refuſe the evil, and chooſe the good. Some inſtances might be given, in which things might be ſaid or done, before perſons of full underſtanding, without injury, that could not be done without injury, or at leaſt without danger, before perſons in early life.

(4.) In the laſt place, be not wanting in your endeavors and prayers for the public intereſt of religion, and the proſperity of the Redeemer's kingdom. Support, by your conduct and converſation, the public credit of religion.—What is more powerful over the minds of men and the manners of the age, than public opinion? It is more powerful than the moſt ſanguinary laws. And what is public opinion? It is formed by the ſentiments that are moſt frequently heard, and moſt approved in converſation. Had we a juſt ſenſe of the importance of viſible religion, what a powerful principle would it be, of prudent, watchful, guarded conduct, in every ſtate and circumſtance of life? Whatever reaſon there may be to

complain of the frequency of hypocrisy, or seeking the applause of men, I am afraid there is no less reason to complain of the want of attention to that precept of the apostle, "Look not every man on his own things, but "every man also on the things of others;" or of our Lord himself, Matt. v. 16. "Let your light so shine be-"fore men, that they may see your good works, and "glorify your Father which is in heaven." I apprehend that these seemingly opposite faults, are not always separated, but often found in the same persons; that is to say, there may be a strong desire after, and endeavor to obtain public applause, by a few splendid and popular actions, and yet but little attention to that prudent and exemplary conduct, which promotes public usefulness. Consider what you have heard, and the Lord give you understanding to improve and apply it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

DEVOTEDNESS TO GOD.

SERMON 32.

PSALM CXVI. 16.

Oh Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

ACTION SERMON.

MY BRETHREN,

THERE is something so fervent and affectionate in the language of the man after God's own heart, that it is extremely proper to be adopted by us in acts of adoration, trust, or supplication to God. I am at a loss to determine, whether we ought to consider the Christian's access to God, at his holy table, chiefly under one or other of these views. I am inclined to think that it is a sort of compound or union of the whole—Veneration and worship of the eternal God, and the incarnate Redeemer, exhibited to us, and as it were brought near to us by the help of the instituted signs: Reliance and confidence in God, from the opportunity given us of laying hold of his covenant: and thankful supplication to God for his support and countenance, in the surrender of ourselves to his service. I cannot help looking upon the words of the Psalmist in this passage, as carrying in them a mixture of all these holy affections. "Oh Lord, truly I am thy ser-

" vant; I am thy ſervant, and the ſon of thine handmaid. " Thou haſt looſed my bonds: I will offer to thee the ſa- " crifice of thankſgiving, and will call upon the name of " the Lord."

This Pſalm, of which David is univerſally admitted to be the author, ſeems plainly to have been compoſed after ſome ſignal deliverance, of which the remembrance was freſh upon his mind. It was ſuch as had brought his life itſelf into the moſt imminent danger. He acknowledges in the verſe preceding the text, the peculiar and gracious care which God takes of the life of his people: " Precious " in the ſight of the Lord is the death of his ſaints;" and then makes the profeſſion of relation, gratitude, and duty, contained in the words of the text.——As they ſeem to me to be very comprehenſive, and with great propriety to expreſs what ought to be the habitual temper of a Chriſtian, and the frame of ſpirit with which a communicant ought to draw near to God at his table; I ſhall endeavor, in dependance on divine grace,

I. To open the import of the Pſalmiſt's declaration and purpoſe.

II. To apply it to you as hearers of the Goſpel in general, as well as with a view to the ſacred employment immediately before you.

Firſt, then, I propoſe to open the import of the Pſalmiſt's declaration and purpoſe in the text. This I think may be included in the following particulars, to which I intreat your ſerious attention.

1. This expreſſion of the king of Iſrael, implies a very humble ſenſe of his diſtance from, and dependance upon God, as his creature. This is the firſt view which a penitent hath of himſelf when he returns to God. It is the firſt view which a good man hath of himſelf in his approaches to or communion with God. And indeed it is what ought to be inſeparable from the exerciſe of every other pious affection. To have as it were high and honorable thoughts of the majeſty and greatneſs of the living God, and a deep and awful impreſſion of the immediate and continual preſence of the heart-ſearching God—this

naturally produces the greateſt ſelf-abaſement, and the moſt unfeigned ſubjection of ſpirit, before our Maker. It leads to a confeſſion of him as Lord over all, and having the moſt abſolute right not only to the obedience, but to the diſpoſal of all his creatures. I cannot help thinking this is conveyed to us in the language of the Pſalmiſt, when he ſays, " O Lord, truly I am thy ſervant." He was a prince among his ſubjects, and had many other honorable diſtinctions, both natural and acquired, among men; but he was ſenſible of his being a ſervant and ſubject of the King of kings; and the force of his expreſſion, " truly I am thy ſervant," not only ſignifies the certainty of the thing, but how deeply and ſtrongly he then felt a conviction of its truth.

Suffer me to ſay, my brethren, that there is much more in this, than many apprehend. The ſcripture ſpeaks often of the knowledge of God, of a diſcovery of the glory of God, as a thing peculiar to his people, which is very different from merely ſpeculative opinions as to his nature and perfections. It implies an awful impreſſion of his power and greatneſs, a deep ſenſe how little the creature is before him, and how entirely it is in his hand. I love that expreſſion uſed by ſeveral pious writers of the laſt age, of bowing before the ſovereignty of God. When a believer or a worſhipper hath a proper view of this; when it is brought home upon his ſpirit; it as it were baniſhes all other things, all other relations, all other perſons; and he is, to his apprehenſion, alone in the preſence of the inviſible God. And then what abaſement of ſoul is of neceſſity produced! then no language can be found ſufficient to expreſs his vileneſs and nothingneſs in his own ſight. He may be a rich man among his poor neighbors, or a great man among his numerous attendants, or a learned man among the ignorant vulgar; but alas, he is no more than ſinful duſt and aſhes before the omnipotent Jehovah. There is ſomething very magnificent in the deſcription given by the prophet Iſaiah of the majeſty of God, and the correſpondent ſentiments of thoſe who ſee and feel it, in the 2d chapter of his prophecies, verſe 10, 11. " Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the duſt, for fear of

" the Lord, and for the glory of his Majeſty. The lofty " looks of man ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs of " men ſhall be bowed down, and the Lord alone ſhall be " exalted in that day." And again, verſes 19, 20, 21, 22. " And they ſhall go into the holes of the rocks, and into " the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the " glory of his majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly " the earth. In that day a man ſhall caſt his idols of ſil- " ver, and his idols of gold, which they made, each one " for himſelf to worſhip, to the moles and to the bats: to " go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the " ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of " his majeſty, when he ariſeth to ſhake terribly the earth. " Ceaſe ye from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils: " for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

2. This declaration of the Pſalmiſt implies a confeſſion of his being bound by particular covenant and conſent unto God, and a repetition of the ſame by a new adherence. This, as it was certainly true with regard to him, having often dedicated himſelf to God, ſo I take it to be concluded on the reiteration of the expreſſion here, " Oh " Lord, truly I am thy ſervant, I am thy ſervant." As if he had ſaid, ' Oh Lord, it is undeniable; it is impoſ- ' ſible to recede from it. I am thine by many ties. I am ' by nature thy ſubject and thy creature; and I have many ' times confeſſed thy right, and promiſed my own duty.' I need not mention to you, either the examples in the Pſalmiſt's writings, or the occaſions in his hiſtory, on which he ſolemnly ſurrendered himſelf to God. It is ſufficient to ſay, that it was very proper that he ſhould frequently call this to mind, and confeſs it before God, as what, though it could not make his Creator's right any ſtronger, would certainly make the guilt of his own violation of it, ſo much the greater. It was certainly alſo a repetition of thoſe engagements, and a ſolemn promiſe of continued adherence to them. There is no appearance in his language, that he either regrets or repents his ſubjection to God; on the contrary, he manifeſts his deliberate approbation of it, as his intereſt as well as duty. What he ſays here to God, has ſomething of the ſame

meaning with what he says elsewhere to his own soul. Psa. xvi. 2. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art "my Lord." And he afterwards expresses the greatest complacency in this choice, verses 5, 6, of the above Psalm, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, "and my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are "fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly "heritage."

I take it to be very natural for pious persons to look back upon their former engagements to God. It is a part of the worship they owe to him, not only to glorify him as God, but to adhere to him as their God. It comes in with propriety as a part of confession, of praise, and of holy resolution. It humbles the spirit under a sense of sin, as a breach of promise, as well as duty. It is matter of praise that we have been inclined and enabled to give ourselves to God, according to the beautiful sentiment of David, who gives thanks to God, that he and his people had been enabled to make such free and liberal contributions to the building of the Temple, 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 14. "Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy "glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, "that we should be able to offer so willingly after this "sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have "we given thee." It is also plainly a part of our new engagement, which is no more than a ratification of what we have often and willingly done before.

3. This declaration of the Psalmist is an expression of his peculiar and special relation to God, "I am thy ser-"vant and the son of thine handmaid." There is another passage of his writings, where the same expression occurs, Psal. lxxxvi. 16. "O turn unto me, and have mer-"cy upon me, give thy strength unto thy servant, and save "the son of thine handmaid." There is some variation indeed among interpreters in the way of illustrating this phrase. Some take it for a figurative way of affirming that he was bound in the strongest manner to God, as those children who were born, of a maid-servant, and born in his own house, are in the most absolute manner his property. Others take it to signify his being not only

brought up in a visible church of God, but in a pious family, and educated in his fear; and others would have it to signify still more especially, that the Psalmist's mother was an eminently pious woman. And indeed I do not think that was a circumstance, if true, either unworthy of him to remember, or of the spirit of God to put upon record. In the New Testament, we find the apostle Paul, taking notice of a similar circumstance in the case of Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 5. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, &c." Without determining precisely in what sense to take the words, it is certainly added here to signify some peculiar and intimate relation to God, which laid him under the strongest ties of adherence and subjection.

As there was much beauty and propriety in the Psalmists mentioning this circumstance, so every pious person ought especially in the Lord's supper, to recollect the peculiar relations he stands under to God. Even as members of the visible church we are the servants of God, born in his house, baptized in his name, favored with the light of the gospel, blessed with clearness and fullness of instruction, animated by eminent and shining examples. As many as have been brought up either as children or servants in pious families, separated from the solicitations, and sheltered from the insults of wicked men; careful instruction, regular government, faithful admonition and kind invitation, laid as it were a strict and powerful constraint upon them, brought them into, and kept them in the paths of piety and truth: ought they not to remember it with humility and gratitude, nay, if by means of but one pious parent, or other relation, had been brought to acquaintance with God, it ought to be remembered as laying them under peculiar ties. To all which I shall only add, that if by the goodness of a gracious God, any former means of instruction, public or private, or singular dispensation of providence, has been accompanied with power, it ought to be improved in this new surrender of ourselves to God, at once to increase our present gratitude and promote our future stedfastness in the paths of obedience.—This leads me to observe,

4. That the declaration of the Pſalmiſt implies a ſenſe of gratitude for ſignal mercies, "Thou haſt looſed my "bonds." I think it is probable that what he had in view immediately here was, deliverance from perſonal affliction, probably a dangerous ſickneſs, threatening immediate diſſolution. But the way in which it is introduced and the uſe to which it is applied, is equally ſuited to deliverances of every kind and uſe, to all ſignal mercies which were greatly needed or highly prized. He aſcribes the honor of it to God, he puts it to his own charge as a debt due to God, and on this account propoſes a return of duty and gratitude to God. It were no difficult matter to produce examples of a ſimilar conduct in the Pſalmiſt, on his being favored with remarkable deliverances in his family, from the enemies of his country, from ſlander and reproach, or in unexpected honor and advancement, as was his from the ſheepfold to the kingdom of Iſrael.

Now ought not every good man, to follow the example of the Pſalmiſt in this particular, to remember and acknowledge all inſtances of ſignal mercy. There is ſcarcely any perſon, but may recollect ſeveral examples of theſe in the courſe of their lives. They may remember how earneſtly they deſired deliverance in the time of danger, what a ſenſe of gratitude was upon their minds, when the mercy was recent, and this may be profitably improved, for ſtrengthening the ties which they lie under to God their Saviour. This will have a double effect, if the deliverance was implored by the prayer of faith, and if any marks can be diſcerned, of their having obtained the ſanctified improvement of it. But above all, with what propriety may they adopt the language of the Pſalmiſt, if they have been delivered from bondage of ſpirit, as well as fear and ſolicitude as to their outward ſtate. And it frequently happens, that theſe two go together. It was almoſt always ſo with the Pſalmiſt, and is natural to expect that it will be ſo with every ſerious perſon; for affliction brings ſin to remembrance, and they not only tremble, for the iſſue of the trial under which they groan, but apprehend the holy diſpleaſure of that God, who caſt them into the furnace, and with whom they have to do. But if the candle of the

Lord again ſhineth upon them, and they are walking in the light of his countenance, they may well ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "O Lord, truly I am thy ſervant, I am thy ſervant, and the ſon of thy hand-maid: thou haſt looſed my bonds."

5. In the laſt place, This declaration implies a ſolemn dedication and ſurrender of himſelf to God, and his ſervice for the time to come. This is the end of the retroſpect which he takes of his character and ſtate, "I will offer to thee the ſacrifice of thankſgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord." He was reſolved to live a life of gratitude to God, to take all methods of openly and publicly acknowledging him as the author of his mercies. If we would ſee further his purpoſe, we may look back to the 8, 9, 10, ver. "For thou haſt delivered my ſoul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." He promiſes therefore a life of obedience, and as the ſource of thankful truſt and acquieſcence in God, he ſeems by the 11th verſe, to have been diſconcerted by diſcovering the treachery of men, but every thing is rectified and made up by the goodneſs and all-ſufficiency of God.

So my brethren, ought every perſon who is this day to ſit down at the table of the Lord, after a ſerious recollection of all his paſt mercies, to devote and conſecrate himſelf unto God. Take him for your portion: place your happineſs in his favor; receive your daily bread from him as his gift; pay for every mercy the tribute of praiſe; live not upon the creature without God, but endeavor to enrich and ſweeten created comforts, by communion with God: Reſolve to ſerve him with your body and ſpirit which are his, ſerve him ſincerely, reſolving that nothing ſhall have quiet poſſeſſion of your heart, or indulgence in your life, that is contrary to his will. Serve him with zeal, eſpouſe his intereſt, plead his cauſe, and eſteem it your honor, if by your authority, by your talents, by your ſubſtance, you can promote his glory. Put your truſt in his providence. You are yet in the body, liable to all the viciſſitudes of this mortal ſtate. Be perſuaded of the infinite wiſdom and all-ſufficiency of God. Let him diſpoſe of you freely. Reſiſt exceſſive anxiety and fear, and oppoſe to all the gloomy

horrors of a fruitful apprehenſion, the ſhield of faith in almighty ſtrength, which is able to bear you up ſuperior to every trial, and to every enemy. Do in every ſtate of difficulty as the prophet Iſaiah, in the name of God, invites the people of Iſrael to do on the approach of public judgment, Iſaiah xxvi. 20. "Come, my people, enter "thou into thy chambers, and ſhut thy doors about thee: "hide thyſelf as it were for a little moment, until the in-"dignation be overpaſt."

I proceed now in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of this ſubject,

1. Suffer me, my brethren, to plead with every ſinner; to plead with every hearer in this aſſembly, the right of his Maker to his ſervice. He hath made and formed you, and his viſitation preſerves your ſpirits. He only holdeth your ſoul in life, and unto him belong the iſſue from death —Of him, and to him, and through him, are all things. Have you therefore ſerved him as your maſter, and placed your happineſs on his favors. I chooſe, my brethren, to aſſert God's dominion over his creatures, that if it pleaſe him to accompany it with his ſpirit, it may carry conviction to many who are living in quiet and ſelf-ſatisfaction, although they are dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. Many, if they are free from groſſer corruptions, are no way apprehenſive of the danger of being *without God* in the world. Ignorance of themſelves, extenuation of ſin, fooliſhly placing a merit in a few common outſide duties, and preſumptuous hopes in God's general mercy, are the deluſive grounds of the hope of ſuch perſons. Nay, ſometimes, alas for their folly! the chief thing they have to truſt to, is the ill that they have not done. I really do not ſwear, ſays one, I hate drinking abominably, it is a beaſtly vice. What ſignify theſe partial juſtifications? I have known, though it is not common, I confeſs, an habitual adulterer that would not ſwear, and I could ſhew you a covetous hard hearted wretch, grinding every day the faces of the poor, that will neither drink nor ſwear. But are you the ſervants of God? are you devoted to his fear? believe it ſirs, there is an abſolute neceſſity of an entire change in your nature, to fit you for the kingdom of God. You are

his creatures, you ought to be his ſervants, and in one ſenſe indeed his enemies are his ſervants, becauſe they are under the dominion of his Providence, and ſhall at laſt be the monuments of his vengeance. Be warned then in time, for you may reſt aſſured that no man hath hardened himſelf againſt him, and proſpered.

2. But in the next place, I muſt not omit giving warning of their danger, to ſuch as are living in open and avowed profanity. They are ſo far from being the ſervants of God, that they are his enemies, his confederated enemies, and the enemies of every thing that ſtands in a viſible relation to him. I will once more, my brethren, take the liberty to denounce the judgment of God, againſt all ſuch perſons, and I am preaching the goſpel of Chriſt while I am doing ſo, for he ſhall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. And all profane ſwearers that ſpeak the language of hell on earth, ſhall have it as their abode for ever. All deſpiſers of the ſabbath of reſt. — —

THE RIGHTEOUS SCARCELY SAVED, AND THE WICKED CERTAINLY DESTROYED.

SERMON 33.

1 PETER iv. 18.

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

ALL mankind may be divided into two great classes, the righteous and the wicked, the friends and the enemies of God, the heirs of glory and the heirs of hell. These, though mixed together on earth, and in many cases not easily to be distinguished by men, are yet essentially different in their characters, and shall at last meet with a very different fate. Of how much moment would it be for every one to see his own character and state before the final separation, when the judge shall divide them, one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats!

There are many awful tokens of divine justice and holiness in the administration of Providence, which ought to be considered by us, as preludes to the great day of retribution, when God shall render to every man, according to his works. The apostle Peter, in the verses preceding the text, is speaking of the divine judgments which were coming upon that generation, and which were in

part, to fall even upon the church and people of God.— From this he takes occaſion to point out the infinitely greater danger of impenitent ſinners, who were expoſed, not only to the ſame or heavier temporal ſtrokes, but to a final and eternal deſtruction, verſe 17, "For the time is "come that judgment muſt begin at the houſe of God; "and if it firſt begin at us, what ſhall the end be of them "that obey not the goſpel of God?" Conſidering alſo that God in righteous ſeverity, ſees it neceſſary to make even his own people to paſs through the furnace, and through much tribulation, to enter into the kingdom of God, he inſtitutes the compariſon in the text, to point out the dreadful ſtate of the finally impenitent; "And if the righteous "ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſin- "ner appear?"

In diſcourſing further upon this ſubject, what I propoſe is,

I. To explain the import of the declaration, or ſuppoſition, in the firſt part of the text, that "the righteous "ſcarcely are ſaved."

II. To conſider the concluſion drawn from it, by the apoſtle, "where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?"

III. I ſhall make a practical improvement of the ſubject for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place then, I am to explain the import of the declaration, or ſuppoſition, in the firſt part of the text, that "the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved." There is the greater neceſſity of this, that the expreſſion is both ſtrong and ſingular. There are many paſſages indeed, that carry in them truths akin to it, and founded upon it; but the ſentiment itſelf, is almoſt peculiar to this paſſage, that "the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved." There are ſome, who ſuppoſe that the expreſſion is borrowed from, or alludes to Prov. xi. 31. "Behold, the righteous ſhall be recompenſed "in the earth: much more the wicked and the ſinner." The meaning they give thus: Even the righteous muſt expect to meet with ſufferings and calamities on earth, much more, wicked men, under the juſt diſpleaſure of a holy God. But I think it is plain, that the apoſtle in our

text, has an eye to the decisive judgment of the last day; for he says in the preceding verse, "What shall the end be "of them, that obey not the gospel of God." It is no where said in scripture, that wicked men shall be punished in the present life, in a manner fully adequate to their guilt, much less that a just and visible proportion is to be observed between their sufferings and those of the servants of God. On the contrary, they are called the men of the world; it is said, they have their part and portion in this life, and their prosperity, compared with the trials and sufferings of good men, appears to have been in every age a source of temptation to the children of God.

We must therefore understand the apostle, as speaking of the eternal state, both of the righteous and the wicked, in the correspondent parts of this passage. What then is the meaning of the righteous being scarcely saved? It cannot mean that there is any defect or straitness in the mercy of God. The invitation to sinners in the gospel, is not only urgent, but full, free, and infinitely gracious. It cannot mean that there is any defect in the mind or power of our Redeemer, as if the security of those who put their trust in him were to be doubted, or their victory over all the enemies of their salvation were uncertain. To affix any such meaning to the words, would be to set them in direct opposition to many other passages of scripture, and to do the greatest injury to the divine wisdom and truth. In order therefore, to open the import of this interesting declaration, you may observe the following things;

1. The righteous may be said to be scarcely saved, because all are justly liable to divine vengeance, and it is only of the free grace, and sovereign mercy of God, that any are saved. This, my brethren, is a truth of the greatest moment, repeated in almost every page of the sacred oracles, but which none can either understand or approve, till they are effectually humbled by the spirit of God. It is however, the sum and substance of the gospel. See in what terms it is described by the apostle Paul, Eph. ii. 4—10. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great "love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead "in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: (by

" grace ye are faved) and hath raiſed us up together, and " made us ſit together in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus. " That in the ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding " riches of his grace, in his kindneſs toward us, through " Chriſt Jeſus. For by grace are ye faved through faith; " and that not of yourſelves; it is the gift of God: Not " of works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt: For we are his " workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, " which God hath before ordained that we ſhould walk in " them." There is not a believer on earth, nor a ſaint in heaven, but who is ready to acknowledge, that he was by nature an enemy to God in his mind by wicked works; that he had highly provoked him, and that if God had dealt with him in ſtrict juſtice, he would have been for ever baniſhed from his preſence and enjoyment. Probably many will recollect the time of their ignorance and ſecurity, and admire the patience of God towards them, and ſee that they are indeed ſcarcely ſaved, ſince they have been brought back from the very brink of deſtruction. If any malefactor had been arraigned, judged and condemned to die, and after apprehending the juſt puniſhment of his crime, ſhould be ſaved by an act of royal clemency, at a ſtake or on a ſcaffold, would he not conſider himſelf as ſcarcely ſaved. But this is no more than a juſt image of the ſtate and views of a pardoned ſinner, and what will continue to be the views of thoſe who have entered into reſt. They are clothed with white robes, as an emblem, not of innocence, but abſolution, and the ſong of praiſe which they ſing, intimates the condition from which they were brought, Rev. v. 9. " Thou art " worthy to take the book, and to open the ſeals thereof: " for thou waſt ſlain, and haſt redeemed us to God by thy " blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, " and nation;" verſe 12. " Worthy is the lamb that was " ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and " ſtrength, and honor, and glory, and bleſſing."

This leads me to obſerve, that as their ſalvation is of ſovereign grace in the Father's love, ſo it was purchaſed by the moſt amazing ſufferings of their Redeemer in their room. They are ſcarcely ſaved, not only from the want

of merit in themſelves, but from the infinite expence and coſt laid out by him for their redemption. Such was the evil of ſin, and ſo deplorable the ſtate of the ſinner, that the wiſdom, truth, and holineſs of God, ſeemed all to demand his perdition. The whole creation could not furniſh a ſufficient ranſom; for the redemption of the ſoul was precious, and it ceaſed forever. Then the eternal Son of God, clothed with infinite mercy, and conveyed in ſovereign power, preſented himſelf as our Redeemer, ſaying, "Lo, I come," &c. Oh, amazing truth! Oh, unſearchable ſubject! Juſtly may we ſay, that the righteous ſcarcely are ſaved, ſince it required ſo coſtly an expiation. Let us remember in faith, what our Saviour endured in the garden and on the croſs, before he could ſay it was finiſhed; and we ſhall be conſtrained to confeſs that it was no eaſy undertaking to redeem thoſe ſouls that were forfeited to divine juſtice.

To conclude this particular, the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved, becauſe the application of this redemption to their ſouls, and their being brought to an unfeigned acceptance of it, required the almighty power and energy of the ſpirit of grace. This alſo is a part of that revealed truth, which the natural man hears with reluctance, and cannot receive. Yet it is not only plainly taught in ſcripture, but daily ratified in experience. John i. 13. "Which "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor "of the will of man, but of God." Without the power of the holy Ghoſt, the goſpel may be preached to ſinners from day to day, and from year to year, and yet they ſhall continue in their natural and miſerable ſtate.

It is the work of the ſpirit to open the blinded underſtanding, to awaken the ſecure and dozing conſcience, and to bend the ſtubborn will to the obedience of the goſpel. We are alſo plainly given to underſtand, that if a ſinner long reſiſts the motions of the Spirit, the conſequence, in the economy of providence, is frequently that this divine agent departs from him, and ceaſes any longer to ſtrive with him. Every ſuch perſon is left to himſelf, given up to the dominion of his luſts, and the enſlaving power of habit; and ſo fills up the meaſure of his iniqui-

ties, till he is ripe for final judgment and deſtruction. Let us ſeverally conſider, that if ſuch proviſion was made by an all-wiſe God, for the recovery of ſuch of his creatures as had fallen by their iniquity, it could not be unneceſſary. And ſurely the whole of theſe views conſpire in opening the meaning and confirming the truth of what we are told in this paſſage, that the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved.

2. The righteous may be ſaid to be ſcarcely ſaved, becauſe their number is bnt very ſmall. There are few that be ſaved in compariſon of thoſe that periſh, and in compariſon of thoſe that ſeek and pretend to hope for ſalvation.

This, if it be a truth, is certainly pregnant with meaning, and deeply intereſting. I know there are ſome who have no great love to any thing that directly tends to diſturb the repoſe of a drowſy ſlothful ſpirit, who are fond of denying or calling in queſtion this truth. They allege that our Saviour evaded it as an improper queſtion, when propoſed to him by his diſciples. Luke xiii. 23. "Then "ſaid one unto him, Lord, are there few that be ſaved?" But truly I cannot ſee how he could have anſwered it more plainly, or indeed more properly, than in the following words, "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate: for many, I "ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able." Eſpecially if we compare them with the parallel place in Matth. vii. 13. "Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate: for wide "is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to deſtruc-"tion, and many there be which go in thereat."

What ſhall be the number of the redeemed at laſt, and what proportion it ſhall bear to the whole race of Adam, before the end of this ſtate of things, it is impoſſible for us to know. It is pleaſant to indulge the hope that it ſhall be very great, and that there are times yet to come, when the proſperity of the Redeemer's kingdom ſhall be glorious, and the triumphs of his grace perhaps univerſal. But when we ſpeak of the number of ſuch as ſhall be ſaved, we muſt ſpeak of it as relating to thoſe whom we now ſee, and their characters as drawn in the oracles of truth. And ſurely if we pay the leaſt regard to the marks of religion laid down in ſcripture, we muſt be ſenſible what multitudes are living in direct oppoſition to them, and that there

are many, who though they are called by the name of Chriſt, and maintain ſome degree of outward profeſſion, yet they are far from being Chriſtians in deed and in truth. Matth. vii. 21. "Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, "Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he "that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

3. When the apoſtle ſays that the righteous ſcarcely are ſaved, it may mean that many make not only a common but an eminent profeſſion of religion, who yet ſhall be found finally defective, when weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary. It may mean, that not only the ungodly and openly profane ſinners ſhall be rejected, but that all who ſeem to be righteous ſhall not be found ſo upon trial. This ſeems to lead us to conſider the difference between the charitable, general, and uncertain judgment of man, and the ſtrict, infallible, and deciſive judgment of God. This is beautifully repreſented by our Saviour, in the parable of the tares of the field, Matth. xiii. 24, and onwards; but you may particularly ſee what is ſaid from the 28th verſe, "The ſervants ſaid unto him, wilt thou then that "we go and gather them up? But he ſaid, nay, leſt while "ye gather up the tares, ye root up alſo the wheat with "them. Let both grow together until the harveſt; and "in the time of harveſt I will ſay to the reapers, gather "ye together firſt the tares, and bind them in bundles to "burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

There is a circumſtance to be particularly attended to here, that not only ſhall many deceive their fellow creatures by a falſe profeſſion, but not a few ſhall more effectually and more fatally deceive themſelves, ſaying they ſhall have peace though they walk after the imagination of their own hearts. There are many exhortations in ſcripture, to guard againſt deceiving ourſelves; of which I ſhall only mention one, Gal. iv. 7. "Be not deceived; God is not "mocked: for whatſoever a man ſoweth, that ſhall he "alſo reap." If our Saviour found it neceſſary to ſay to the twelve whom he had choſen, "Ye know not what "manner of ſpirit ye are of;" much more may the ſame thing be ſaid to numbers of profeſſing Chriſtians in theſe laſt days. There are many ſins that may adhere to a reli-

gious profeſſion, or be covered with a ſacred veil, which yet are inconſiſtent with true religion. See what the apoſtle Paul ſays, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. "Though I ſpeak with "the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, "I am become as ſounding braſs, or a tinkling cymbal." And the apoſtle James i. 26. "If any man among you "ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but "deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." It is an awful deſcription given us by our Saviour, Matth. vii. 22. "Many will ſay to me in that day, Lord, Lord, "have we not prophefied in thy name? And in thy "name have caſt out devils? And in thy name done "many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs unto "them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work "iniquity."

I ſhall only add one evidence, with which experience furniſhes us, that even in an eminent profeſſion there may be at bottom no ſincerity. There never was a time of trial in the church by perſecution, but there were ſeveral of the moſt eminent in ſtation, gifts and profeſſion, who were guilty of apoſtacy; a ſure evidence that they were not found in the faith, and a great leſſon of humiliation and caution to us. True religion bears all trials, and it is only he that endureth to the end that ſhall be ſaved. It is highly probable, that the apoſtle had this very thing in view, in the paſſage where my text lies; for in the preceding verſe, he had been animating them to ſuffer as Chriſtians, and concludes in the following verſe thus, "Wherefore let them that ſuffer, according to the will of "God, commit the keeping of their ſouls to him in well-"doing as unto a faithful Creator."

4. In the laſt place the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved, becauſe thoſe who are ſaved, ſhall be ſaved with much difficulty. That is to ſay, it will require the utmoſt exertion of their care and vigilance. They may expect a continual, conflict with temptations and trials from without, and the ſtirrings of corruptions from within. There is nothing more contrary to the ſcripture view of our chriſtian courſe, than to ſuppoſe it a ſtate of unmoleſted quiet, ſecurity and indulgence. It is repreſented to us by every

image that carries in it the idea of oppoſition, activity and vigilance. It is ſtriving, Matth. vii. 13. "Enter ye in at "the ſtraight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the "way, that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be "which go in thereat:" It is contending in a race, Heb. xii. 1. "Wherefore, ſeeing we alſo are compaſſed about "with ſo great a cloud of witneſſes, let us lay aſide every "weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and "let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us." It is fighting, 1 Tim. vi. 12. "Fight the good fight of "faith," and it is repreſented as inceſſant labor, Phil. ii. 12. "Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trem-"bling."

Indeed when we conſider from what, and how many quarters, we muſt expect oppoſition, this truth will appear with the fulleſt evidence. Conſider the implacable hatred of the great adverſary, the reproach and injuries of wicked men, their ſtill more pernicious example and ſolicitation, the allurements of the world, in this ſenſible ſtate, and the treachery and deceitfulneſs of our own hearts. Of the great danger of all theſe we have the greateſt reaſon to be convinced from the confeſſion and teſtimony of thoſe who have gone before us; yet over them all the believer muſt obtain the victory, and ſhall obtain it in his Redeemer's ſtrength. 1 John v. 4. "For whatſoever is born of God "overcometh the world: and this is the victory that over-"cometh the world, even our faith."

There is nothing here ſaid contrary to what the ſcripture informs us, of the peace and conſolation that attends the practice of true religion. It is not ſaid to diſcourage the believer; but to put him on his guard, and to warn him not to miſtake the nature and foundation of that peace he is entitled to expect. It does not conſiſt in a neglect of his enemies, far leſs in a confederacy with, or ſubjection to them, but in the aſſured proſpect, and growing evidence of his victory over them. Further, the inward conſolation of a Chriſtian does not conſiſt in thinking light of ſin, by excuſing it, or juſtifying himſelf by denying it; but in unfeigned ſelf-denial, a willingneſs to ſee the evil of ſin, and taking ſhame to himſelf by confeſſing it, together

with evangelical views of divine mercy in the pardon of it, and the promised strength of divine grace to enable him to resist and subdue it.

II. I proceed now to the second thing proposed, which was to consider the inference drawn in the last part of the verse, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" I need scarcely tell you, that the form of a question used here, is a very common figure of speech to signify their dreadful situation. This just but very awful inference, is intended for the terror of those who live in open ungodliness, and avowed contempt of divine mercy. Perhaps it may be proper from the context, to consider a little the time when the wicked shall be exposed to this terrible danger: and then the import of the threatening itself. As to the time when the difference is to appear, it may be,

1. In a time of public calamity, or any remarkable visitation of divine severity. Such a time is described, Luke xxi. 25, 26. "There shall be upon the earth distress of "nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roar-"ing; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking "after those things which are coming on the earth; for "the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Then the conscience of the most obdurate is sometimes alarmed. I am sensible, and I have formerly hinted, that good men have no charter of exemption from outward sufferings. But in these times of general trial, the difference between them and others is very great. They have an anchor of hope in the favor of a reconciled, and in the wisdom and providence of an omnipotent God. But the profane and ungodly, terrified by the reproaches of a guilty conscience, are made to tremble, through fear of the execution of deserved judgment.

2. In a time of personal distress, and apparent danger of death. This important change is no light matter, even to the best. They have often no small degree of solicitude and fear, as to the manner of going through this last and decisive conflict. But how much more fearful an aspect must the king of terrors wear, to the impenitent sinner? when the charm is dissolved, and all his sinful pleasures are turned into worm-wood and gall; when he sees he

muſt bid an eternal farewell to every ſenſual delight, enter into a world of ſpirits, and appear in the preſence of God. But,

3. Both theſe are only preparatory to the day of judgment, "For we muſt all appear before the judgment-ſeat "of Chriſt." Then his people ſhall lift up their heads with joy, for the day of their redemption has arrived. But with what inexpreſſible confuſion ſhall the wicked then be covered? In vain ſhall they call upon the mountains and hills to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb. Now they affront his perſon, oppoſe his reign, reſiſt his ſpirit, and ſcorn his ſervants. But where ſhall they appear, and what will they do, when the "Lord Jeſus ſhall "be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking ven-"geance on them that know not God, and obey not the "goſpel?"

This leads me more particularly to conſider the import of the inference in the text, "If the righteous ſcarcely be "ſaved, where ſhall the ungodly and the ſinner appear?" And I think it plainly carries in it three things, that from the holineſs and ſeverity of God, and the righteous ſcarcely being ſaved, we may learn the certainty, the greatneſs, and the juſtice of the puniſhment of impenitent ſinners.

1. The certainty of it. That as the threatenings are awful, the execution ſhall be inevitable. Men are exceedingly prone, from partiality to themſelves, and from the ſuggeſtions of the father of lies, to diſbelieve the threatenings as well as the promiſes of God. This was a great part of the temptation to the commiſſion of the firſt ſin, Gen. iii. 4. "And the ſerpent ſaid unto the woman, "ye ſhall not ſurely die." And the credit that was given to it at that time, has been continued by ſinners in every ſubſequent age. They are ready to preſume upon the general goodneſs of God, and to flatter themſelves that his threatenings ſhall be either wholly remitted or greatly abated. We find that ſome men of corrupt minds have even ſet themſelves to reaſon againſt the rigor of the ſcripture denunciations againſt ſin, and the eternal puniſhment of ſinners.

But how fatal the deluſion? The truth of God is an inſeparable bar to this deceitful expectation. Iſ. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye to the righteous, that it ſhall be well with "him; for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe "unto the wicked! it ſhall be ill with him; for the re- "ward of his hands ſhall be given him." Pſ. l. 21, 22. "Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence: thou "thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch an one as thyſelf: "but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before "thine eyes. Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leſt "I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Nay, not only is this aſſerted in the word of God, but the whole procedure of divine Providence ſerves to confirm it. If the ſalvation of the righteous is with difficulty obtained; if their redemption is ſo dearly purchaſed; if Chriſt muſt bleed before they can be forgiven; how ſhall the ungodly be able to ſtand in the judgment! If even the ſervants of God muſt be expoſed to ſo many ſufferings in the day of trial, what muſt be the condition of his enemies in the day of retribution? If even the ſins of the holy muſt be viſited, how ſhall the crimes of the impenitent paſs unpuniſhed? This is plainly one part of the truth contained in this paſſage; and whoever will deliberately conſider the uniform tenor of the holy ſcriptures, and compare it with the diſpenſations of divine Providence, will have reaſon to tremble at the dreadful ſtate of incorrigible ſinners, and to ſay with the apoſtle Paul, Heb. xii. 25. "See "that ye refuſe not him that ſpeaketh. For if they eſ- "caped not who refuſed him that ſpake on earth, much "more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him "that ſpeaketh from heaven."

2. The expreſſion in the text implies the greatneſs of the puniſhment of ſinners. It is indeed, my brethren, every where repreſented in ſcripture in ſuch terms, as ſerve to convey to us the moſt dreadful apprehenſions of its weight, as well as the deepeſt conviction of its certainty. It is repreſented as the blackneſs of darkneſs forever, and as a worm that ſhall never die. But the image moſt commonly uſed is fire, which is the moſt terrible to ſenſe, of all the elements we have any knowledge of. It is a lake

that burns with fire and brimſtone for evermore. Without entering at all into the queſtion, how much is literal, and how much figurative in theſe images, the juſt concluſion from them is, that thoſe who ſhall be the final monuments of divine vengeance, ſhall be in a ſtate ſorrowful and comfortleſs as darkneſs, painful as a gnawing worm, and dreadful as fire.

This is alſo manifeſtly founded on the reflection in the text, "if the righteous are ſcarcely ſaved:" if they ſuffer ſo much at preſent by divine permiſſion; if they ſuffer ſo much by the perſecution of the ungodly, what a load of vengeance awaits the wicked in the day of reckoning, when he will recompenſe tribulation to the troublers of his choſen? If there is ſo much holy ſeverity neceſſary on account of ſin even in the preſent life, which is the time of divine forbearance, even towards the children of God, who are the objects of his everlaſting love, what ſhall be the ſtate of thoſe who have out-ſinned the ſeaſon of his grace, and forfeited all title to his mercy, on whom he intends at once to glorify his juſtice, and to magnify his power. Hear the words of the Holy Ghoſt 2 Theſſ. i. 9. "Who "ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the "preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

3. The expreſſion in the text, implies the juſtice of the puniſhment of ſinners. This is a circumſtance always to be taken in, for at the laſt day he ſhall judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man, whom he hath ordained. He ſhall judge the world in righteouſneſs and the people with his truth. This is a circumſtance not only for the illuſtration of the glory of God, but for the manifeſtation of the preſent truth. If the puniſhment of ſinners were not juſt, it could not be great; if it were not known and felt by themſelves to be juſt, it would not be intolerable.——

THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

SERMON 34.

MATTHEW xi. 30.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

A CLEAR view of divine truth is of the utmoſt moment, both to the holineſs and comfort of the children of God. They are ſanctified by the truth. It is no leſs neceſſary, by manifeſtation of the truth, to turn ſinners from the error of their ways; for the word of God is quick and powerful. While we keep theſe things in view, we ought alſo to remember, that the truths of God are injured, not only by oppoſition, but perverſion. We are aſſured that thoſe who are unlearned and unſtable, wreſt this good word of God to their own deſtruction. If this is the caſe, it follows naturally, that as the bait is moſt dangerous, when the hook is moſt effectually concealed; ſo falſhood will be moſt apt to inſinuate itſelf, when it wears the habit, and has the greateſt reſemblance to real truth.

The reaſon of my uſing this introduction to what ſhall be offered on the text now read, is, that it is one of the paſſages moſt frequently, and moſt artfully perverted, or moſt unhappily miſapplied. It contains a moſt important and ſalutary truth, if taken in its proper meaning, and according to the analogy of faith. But as it is wreſted and

perverted by men of corrupt minds, it is often made to convey a ſtupifying and dangerous poiſon. What more important, than to deſtroy the unjuſt accuſations of the father of lies, as if religion were a heavy and inſupportable burden? But if, on the other hand, the ſame thing is made uſe of to ſew pillows for all armholes, and ſing the ſinner aſleep in ſecurity, it is equally deſtructive. Therefore, in diſcourſing of this ſubject, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, I will endeavor,

I. To ſhow you what you are not to ſuppoſe, implied in this declaration of our Lord, "My yoke is eaſy, and "my burden light."

II. What is its true and proper meaning, and

III. In the laſt place, to apply the ſubject.

Firſt, then, I am to ſhow you what you are not to ſuppoſe implied in this declaration of our Lord, "My yoke is "eaſy, and my burden light." On this, I beſeech you to attend to the following obſervations.

1. When our Saviour ſays, "My yoke is eaſy, and "my burden light," you are not to ſuppoſe that he has narrowed the extent, or weakened the obligation of the law of God. There are ſome who ſpeak in ſuch terms, as if they thought that Chriſt had granted ſome licenſe and indulgence to human corruption: that he had abated the ſeverity of the law, and would not be ſo highly offended by the tranſgreſſion of it. Becauſe we are taught that he hath redeemed us from the curſe of the law, or the rigor of its ſanction as a covenant of works, they ſpeak as if they thought, or at leaſt ſo as to lead others to think, that he hath made void the obligation of it as a rule of duty. But the law of God is perfect, eternal, and unchangeable. It is a tranſcript of his own nature, which he will not, or which, I ſpeak it with reverence, he cannot diſpenſe with. The ſcripture expreſsly ſays, that he cannot deny himſelf.

Now our bleſſed Lord himſelf has told us upon this ſubject, Matth. v. 17, 18. "Think not that I am come to de-"ſtroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to deſtroy, "but to fulfil. For verily I ſay unto you, till heaven "and earth paſs, one jot or one title ſhall in no wiſe

" pafs from the law, till all be fulfilled." Agreeably to this, he hath been fo far from narrowing the extent of the law, that he hath afferted its honor, vindicated it from the falfe gloffes and loofe interpretation of the Scribes and Pharifees; and pointed out its fpirituality and influence upon the confcience and heart. See feveral inftances of this in the above cited chapter, particularly verfes 21, 22, and 27, 28. " Ye have heard that it was faid by them of old " time, Thou fhalt not kill: and, whofoever fhall kill, " fhall be in danger of the judgment: But I fay unto you, " that whofoever is angry with his brother without a caufe, " fhall be in danger of the judgment; and whofoever fhall " fay to his brother, Raca, fhall be in danger of the coun- " cil: but whofoever fhall fay, thou fool, fhall be in dan- " ger of hell-fire. Ye have heard that it was faid by them " of old time, Thou fhalt not commit adultery: but I fay " unto you, that whofoever looketh on a woman to luft " after her, hath committed adultery with her already in " his heart." How diftant is this from relaxation, or from modifying and accommodating the law to the corruptions of men! And as to the obligation of the law, nothing is more clear, than that our Saviour has not taken from, but added to it in many ways. He has added to it by the clearnefs of the difcovery which he hath made of the divine nature and will; by the moft glorious difplay of divine mercy through him; and as a juft and neceffary confequence, by the awful threatenings which he hath denounced againft thofe who fhall continue to defpife the grace of the gofpel. Hebrews ii. 2, 3. " For if the word " fpoken by angels was ftedfaft, and every tranfgreffion " and difobedience received a juft recompence of reward; " how fhall we efcape if we neglect fo great falvation, " which at the firft began to be fpoken by the Lord, and " was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" And the fame epiftle, ch. x. verfes 26, 27, 28, 29, "For if we " fin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge " of the truth, there remaineth no more facrifice for fins, " but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery " indignation, which fhall devour the adverfaries. He " that defpifed Mofes' law, died without mercy under two

" or three witneſſes: of how much ſorer puniſhment, ſup-
" poſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden
" under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood
" of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified an unholy
" thing, and hath done deſpite unto the Spirit of grace?"

2. When our Saviour ſays, " my yoke is eaſy, and " my burden is light," you are not to ſuppoſe he means to ſay that real, and acceptable obedience to the law of God, is an eaſy thing to men, as they are in themſelves, or in a ſinful and unrenewed ſtate. Oh, ſay ſome, the goſpel is a humane and gentle diſpenſation, the ſame does not bear hard upon human weakneſs. If we ſhould make him to ſay this, my brethren, we ſhould make him to ſpeak in direct oppoſition to many other paſſages of ſcripture, as well as to daily experience, and the nature and reaſon of the thing. Men may if they pleaſe, create to themſelves an image of religion, that ſhall be quite gentle and pliant, that ſhall have nothing in it offenſive to corrupt nature, or at any time oppoſed to the manners of faſhionable life; but nothing can be more diſtant from New-Teſtament truth. There we are told that, Rom. viii. 7, 8, " Becauſe the " carnal mind is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject " to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they " that are in the fleſh, cannot pleaſe God." There we are told, that men are by nature dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, that their recovery is the work of omnipotence, even *the mighty power of God*, and that none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean, but God alone. But why ſhould we multiply paſſages of ſcripture to this purpoſe, when it is manifeſt from the nature of the thing and daily experience? If it were eaſy in this ſenſe to put on Chriſt's yoke, it would alſo be common. Is not the prevalence of wickedneſs a proof to the contrary? Can any thing be more oppoſite than ſin and holineſs? None. Not even light and darkneſs. Can any man then ſerve two maſters? Is it an eaſy thing to love ſin, and practiſe holineſs? Do we ſee it is ſo in any inſtance? Do we reckon it is eaſy for the drunkard to deny his appetite, when he ſees the liquor giving its colour in the cup, and moving itſelf aright? Is it eaſy for the malicious perſon to govern his tongue, or

the covetous man to open his heart? The truth is, it is a direct contradiction, for the law of the Lord searches, and chiefly requires the obedience of the heart; and therefore to suppose, or imagine that the generality of men, who are under the dominion of sin, may notwithstanding keep the commandments of God, is an absurdity which we would not be guilty of, in any other subject. Either, says our Saviour, "make the tree good and his fruit good;" &c. "Can a fountain send out at the same place, sweet "water and bitter?"

3. When our Saviour says "my yoke is easy, and my "burden is light," you are not to suppose, that it is an easy or trifling thing, or what the sinner may do at any time by his own strength, to turn from sin to God. Nothing can be a more pernicious or a more stupifying dose to a poor careless sinner, than to make him suppose that he may easily at any time repent, when necessity shall urge him to it. The whole system of divine truth stands in direct opposition to this error. There our condition by nature is considered as not only miserable, but helpless. It is divine power alone that can effect the change, John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father, "which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him "up at the last day." Psal. cx. 3. "Thy people shall be "willing in the day of thy power." The greatness of the change necessary to salvation demonstrates the same thing, John iii. 3. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man "be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—The multitudes that perish is a further proof. "Strive to "enter in at the strait gate," &c. To this may be added the danger of delay, and the hardening power of habit as frequently mentioned in scripture, Eccles. xii. 1. "Re-"member now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, "when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. Can "the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? "then may ye also, who are accustomed to do evil, learn "to do well." To crown the whole, there are instances in which the day of God's patience, and forbearance is closed, and the sinners eyes shall not be opened on his

danger, Luke xix. 41, 42. "And when he was come "near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If "thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, "the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they "are hid from thine eyes." 2 Theſſ. ii. 11. "For this "cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they "ſhould believe a lie."

4. When Chriſt ſays, "my yoke is eaſy, and my burden "is light," we are not to ſuppoſe that even the children of God ſhall meet with no difficulties in their way. It ſeems to be the miſtake of ſome perſons to think that ſo ſoon as they have truly embraced the goſpel, and obtained peace with God, the conflict is over, they ſhall have an eaſy and ſlothful aſſurance, without oppoſition either from affliction or temptation. But this is quite contrary to what the ſcripture teaches to expect. It teaches us to lay our account with oppoſition from every quarter, injury from without and even treachery from within. The life of a chriſtian muſt be a life of vigilance and prayer. Outward peace, ill founded peace, a ſecure unfaithful conſcience, is what we have the greateſt reaſon to dread. Theſe are hard ſayings in the goſpel, which even the children of God find it difficult to receive. We are expoſed to continual temptation from the world and from worldly men, and to frequent trials both as we are men and chriſtians, Heb. xii. 5. "And ye have forgotten the exhortation, which "ſpeaketh unto you as unto children, my ſon, deſpiſe not "thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art "rebuked of him:" In the chriſtian warfare there is no truce. It is only he that ſhall endure to the end that ſhall be ſaved—The laſt enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed, is death.

Having thus rejected theſe falſe and miſtaken apprehenſions ſometimes ſuggeſted by this paſſage of ſcripture, and greatly encouraged by ſmooth and mollifying teachers, it remains, that I ſhould proceed to point out the true and proper meaning of it, and what we are to underſtand when the Redeemer invites ſinners to come to him, by ſaying, "my yoke is eaſy and my burden is light." And becauſe there are many things pertaining to this ſubject,

that throw light upon each other, I ſhall endeavor to take in the whole compaſs of it, making however the illuſtration of each particular very ſhort.

1. The yoke of Chriſt may be ſaid to be eaſy, and his burden light, becauſe his right to command is undeniable; the authority with which he is inveſted is complete and full. I have placed this firſt, becauſe it lies at the foundation of all religion, and is nothing elſe but the ſupreme authority and abſolute dominion of Jehovah. We all naturally think it hard to ſubmit to uſurped authority, or unjuſt dominion; but when the title to command is clear, obedience immediately appears to be reaſonable and neceſſary, and becomes our unfeigned choice, or the deſire of the heart. Thus, nothing can be more clear than the right of our Maker to the obedience and ſubmiſſion of all his creatures. It is the ſenſe of this carried home upon the conſcience, that gives the firſt riſe to conviction of ſin. A diſcovery of the power and majeſty of the living God, lays the creature in the duſt, and produces ſubjection. But when to this is added, that he is Lord and proprietor of all; that all things were made by him, and for him, then ſin appears in the light of injuſtice and rebellion, and obedience, abſolute and unconditional, is felt to be his due. Believe it my brethren, when the revolted creature returns to his allegiance; when the convinced ſinner ſees the guilt of his rebellion, it at once reconciles him to the law, and makes him willing to put on the yoke.

The ſame thing is a conſtant and growing principle of obedience to the believer. He ſees that he is not his own. He perceives and admits his Creator's and Redeemer's right. He is convinced, that as all things were made for, as all things ſhall finally tend to, ſo that every intelligent creature ought ſupremely to aim at the glory of God. It is this radical principle that chiefly conſtitutes the difference between genuine obedience, and that conſtrained ſervice which may be ſometimes falſely ſo called. Hence it is that true obedience is conſidered as a debt that is *due* to God; falſe obedience on the contrary is conſidered as a debt *charged* upon God. The real chriſtian is happy in ſo far as he is able to obey, and ſincerely grieves

for any remaining backwardneſs and reluctance in his mind. The yoke may well be ſaid to be eaſy, when he is brought to that temper and diſpoſition, that it is not what he does, but what he omits, that fills him with grief, or covers him with ſhame.

2. The Redeemer's yoke is eaſy and his burden light, becauſe all his commands are in themſelves perfectly juſt and right. It is hard indeed, to be obliged to do what we cannot approve, and ſo long as the ſinner has any objection againſt the law, obedience muſt be a burden. But every renewed mind obtains a diſcovery of the infinite amiableneſs of the divine nature, and the excellence and perfection of the divine law. The law is holy, ſays the Apoſtle, Romans 7. "Wherefore the law is holy, and "the commandment holy, and juſt and good." The law of God is a tranſcript of his own infinite excellence, and therefore muſt be perfect and faultleſs. We may take up this matter in a very ſimple, and at the ſame time clear and conſpicuous point of view. The ſum of the moral law is, "Thou ſhalt love," &c. The whole is contained under theſe heads, eſpecially the firſt of them, from which the other is a corollary. Is there any thing more manifeſtly reaſonable, than that we ſhould love ſupremely, what is ſupremely excellent? or where is the rival, that can plead a better title to our affection? If he hath commanded us to love what was not amiable, or to do what was not reaſonable, there would have been ground for complaint. If we take the ſenſe of the ſecond table, by itſelf, we ſhall ſee the ſame thing very plainly, "Thou ſhalt "love thy neighbor as thyſelf;" or which is the ſame thing, "whatſoever ye would, that men do unto you, do ye the "ſame unto them." Is this unreaſonable? Is any man's reaſon ſo perverted, or his conſcience ſo depraved, as to complain of this, as an unjuſt, or oppreſſive law. There are ſome who talk upon this ſubject, in ſuch a manner, as we may truly ſay of them, with the apoſtle, "They ſpeak "of the law, and know neither what they ſay, nor where-"of they affirm;" and they will ſay, our Saviour has made merciful abatements of the law. Pray has he made any abatement of the love of God, and of our neighbor?

Would you be ſatisfied to hear any man trace out a ſyſtem of moral duty, and make any alteration in theſe? Yet they are the whole in ſubſtance; wherever theſe are, every thing will follow of courſe. If you love God ſupremely, and your neighbor as yourſelves, you will neglect no duty to the one or to the other.

When I am upon this branch of the ſubject, the reaſonableneſs of God's commands, it will be proper to obviate an apparent, and at the ſame time, an important objection. You will perhaps ſay, to keep the commands of God, is above our power. Have not you yourſelf, often taught us, that no mere man in this life, is able perfectly to keep the commandments of God? Can that be reaſonable then that is impoſſible? Now conſider I pray you what ſort of impoſſibility this is. It is not natural, but moral. It is not want of power, but want of inclination. Nothing is required of us, that is unſuitable to our ſituation, or above our natural powers; ſo far from it, that even what was our duty before, if by any accident it becomes impoſſible in this ſenſe, it ceaſes to be a duty. God no where commands you to be taller or ſtronger, than he has made you: and though he commands you to labor, working with your hands, if he confines you by ſickneſs, this duty no longer binds. He has given you faculties, and natural powers for every thing that he requires. Are not all your powers, both of mind and body, as fit for your Maker's ſervice, as any other purpoſe? Is not the tongue as fit to ſpeak truth, as falſhood: and every member of the body as fit to do what is lawful or uſeful, as what is ſinful or hurtful: The commands of God, then, are neither impoſſible or difficult to thoſe, who are willing to obey them. No man can ſay with truth, that he deſired with all his heart, to do his Maker's will, and could not. But perhaps ſome will ſay, this indiſpoſition itſelf, is my nature, I cannot help it. If any think this excuſe may be offered to God, let him firſt make trial of offering it to his fellow creature; or ſuppoſe another to offer it to himſelf. Suppoſe you ſhould complain of another, for ſtealing your ſubſtance, or blaſting your name, or otherwiſe injuring you; and that he ſhould anſwer, that he could not help it.

What, you would say, you could not help it; what necessity obliged you? Why says he, it was my nature, because I hate you, and it grieves me to see you prosper. Would that be accepted as an excuse? I think not; for it is the very essence of the injury. On the whole, it plainly appears, that the commands of God are all reasonable and just, neither can they suffer any abatement, without infringing upon the holiness of his own nature, and the wisdom and equity of his government itself.

3. The Redeemer's yoke is easy, and his burden light, because all his commands have an immediate and direct tendency to promote our own comfort and happiness. They are not less reasonable as they express the right of the Creator, than they are gracious, as they are calculated to promote the interest of the creature. I do not mean here, only or chiefly, the great reward which he hath in mercy provided and promised to those, that keep them, but that in their own nature, they are fitted to promote our happiness.

I have before sufficiently taken notice, that we are not to understand, by keeping the commands of God, a constrained outward obedience, without the inclination of the heart. Constrained obedience, I confess, is neither acceptable to God, nor delightful to man. But when the service of God, is chosen from the heart, it is both delightful and profitable in all respects. If we examine the matter with care, we shall find, that true religion consists in the exercise of the most noble and grateful affections of mind, or rather the one leading disposition, which when rightly directed as to its object, makes the sum of religion, and is also the source of felicity. It is love, supreme love to God, and through him, and for him, to all his creatures, that is the sum of religion, and must not every body be sensible, that this is a temper and frame of mind, much more desirable, than its opposite. Carry the one and the other, through all their branches and expressions, and see if they will bear the comparison. From love spring thankfulness, contentment, submission, benevolence, beneficence, meekness, compassion, forgiveness; and from hatred spring ambition, rage, impatience, malevolence,

envy, revenge and cruelty. If there were no law of God at all, which of thoſe tribes of affections is moſt deſirable of itſelf, or moſt conducive to our inward comfort and peace?

If we try this matter by experience, let us aſk the children of God, whether they have found his ſervice burdenſome; whether they would exchange a meek, thankful, and contented frame of ſpirit, for the ſtorms of rage, envy, or ambition. Do they look with a jealous or envious eye, on the liberty of wicked men? on the contrary, they would not exchange with any of them, a priſon for a palace, or a ſcaffold for a throne. Perhaps, though there is great blindneſs in the underſtanding itſelf, of wicked men, we may learn the truth even from their experience and confeſſions. We many times hear them acknowledge their bondage; and when they do not explicitly acknowledge it, yet it is eaſy to perceive it. You never hear a bad man taking comfort to himſelf, from the evil he has done, but ſometimes comparatively from the greater evil that they have not done. Without going particularly through every minute circumſtance, let us juſt ſay in general, that whether we conſider the inward temper, or the outward practice, our relations, buſineſs, and enjoyments in life, or hope for futurity, we cannot in any inſtance depart from the commandments of God, without at the ſame time acting contrary to our own manifeſt intereſt: ſo that Wiſdom ſays with great truth and juſtice, Prov. viii. 36. "He that ſinneth againſt me, "wrongeth his own ſoul: all they that hate me, love "death."

4. The Redeemer's yoke is eaſy, and his burden light, becauſe he has given the moſt free and gracious invitation to ſinners to return to God. By his ſufferings he purchaſed their pardon, and is inveſted with full authority to negociate peace. "Thus it is written, and thus it be-"hoved him to ſuffer, that repentance and remiſſion of "ſins," &c. What we are particularly to remember upon this ſubject is, that the invitation is without reſerve or exception, to all of every character, however deep and aggravated their offences. Iſ. i. 18. "Come now, and let "us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord: though your ſins be

" as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they " be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool." 1 Tim. i. 15. " This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all accep- " tation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſin- " ners; of whom I am chief." The offer is alſo free as to the terms, without any coſtly or meriting condition. Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters, " and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; " yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and " without price." Rev. xxii. 17. " And the ſpirit and " the bride ſay, come; and let him that heareth ſay, come; " and let him that is athirſt come; and whoſoever will, " let him take the water of life freely." Can there be any thing more encouraging than theſe gracious invitations? Here it is that we ought to take in the wiſe and happy conſtitution of the Redeemer's perſon, as the ſon of man, as well as the ſon of God, and the meekneſs and gentleneſs of his diſpoſition, this was propheſied of him of old, Iſaiah xlii. 1, 2, 3. " Behold my ſervant whom I uphold; mine " elect, in whom my ſoul delighteth: I have put my ſpirit " upon him, he ſhall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. " He ſhall not cry, nor lift up, nor cauſe his voice to be " heard in the ſtreet. A bruiſed reed ſhall he not break; " and the ſmoaking flax ſhall he not quench: he ſhall " bring forth judgment unto truth." This was beautifully and admirably fulfilled by his appearance in the fleſh, by the meanneſs of his birth, though not of his parentage, by the poverty and ſelf-denial of his life, by the meekneſs and lowlineſs of his carriage, not only through life, but in the laſt and ſuffering ſtage of it; for he endured the contradiction of ſinners againſt himſelf; when he was reviled, he reviled not again. So that he might with the greateſt juſtice ſay as in the context, take my yoke.

5. The Redeemer's yoke is eaſy, and his burden light, becauſe he hath made abundant proviſion of divine ſtrength, to enable us to keep his commandments. How gracious theſe laws, when the law-giver communicates ſtrength for performance? This takes away all objection, and removes every difficulty. What is impoſſible with man, is poſſible with God. There is no heart ſo hard, but

omnipotence is able to ſoften it; no temper ſo depraved, but the Creator is able to renew it. The converſion of a ſinner is always conſidered in ſcripture as the work of God. "God who at firſt commanded the light to ſhine out " of darkneſs," &c. The promiſe of the new covenant is thus deſcribed by Ezekiel xxxvi. 25. " Then will I " ſprinkle clean water upon you, and ye ſhall be clean: " from all your filthineſs, and from all your idols, will I " cleanſe you." And in the New Teſtament, faith which unites us to Chriſt, and every other good diſpoſition, is repreſented as the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8. " For by grace " are ye ſaved, through faith; and that not of yourſelves: " it is the gift of God."

And as the converſion of ſinners to the daily growth of the ſpiritual life, in believers, is to be imputed entirely to the ſame cauſe, for this end it was, that it pleaſed the Father that all fullneſs ſhould dwell in Chriſt; and we have this teſtimony from the apoſtle John i. 16. " And of his " fulneſs have all we received, and grace for grace." —

THE GLORY OF THE REDEEMER IN THE PERPETUITY OF HIS WORK.

SERMON 35.

PSALM lxxii. 17.

His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed.

ACTION SERMON.

MY BRETHREN,

THE whole syſtem of Providence and grace was fixed in the eternal purpoſe of God, before the foundation of the world. Hence he is repreſented, Iſ. xlvi. 10. as, "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient "times the things that are not yet done, ſaying, My coun- "ſel ſhall ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure." The writings of the Old Teſtament give us the hiſtory of the ſeveral openings of this plan, during that diſpenſation, in which we may obſerve almoſt continual references to the appearance of an illuſtrious perſon, at a certain important period, called the fulneſs of time.

The appearance of the Saviour in our nature, including his obedience, his ſufferings and death, his triumphant reſurrection and aſcenſion, was an event ſo aſtoniſhing

in itself, and so great in its effects, as being the means appointed of God for the redemption of a lost world, that we need not be surprised at the great care taken in the Old Testament church, to keep it always in view. It was natural for holy and good men, who had so many intimations given them of it, to think on it with pleasure; and when they were led to speak of future times, to bring in this remarkable period, and mention it with rapture.—And when God inspired his servants to prophesy of the prosperity and happiness of his church and kingdom, he could not fail to raise their descriptions, and lead them to give such views of things as were suitable to that great event, which was to be such a signal illustration of his glorious goodness, and so great a blessing to mankind.

Hence it is, that we find several prophecies begun, in appearance, to celebrate some public blessing, at or near the times in which they were delivered, gradually so heightened by several expressions, as we may perceive that in their full extent they could only relate to the times of the Messiah. Such, for instance, is that in my text: for if we lay together the accounts we have of Solomon, in scripture, and the felicity of his reign; if we remember the scandalous steps he made in the latter part of his life, the dreadful rent that happened in the reign of his son and immediate successor; and that after the course of a few ages, Judah was carried into captivity—we must be sensible, that the expressions in my text, are by far too much exalted, if nothing else was intended by them. But if we consider them as relating to Messiah the Prince, then we see every thing literally fulfilled to the utmost import and extent of the prophetic language, "His name shall "endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as "the sun: and men shall be blessed in him; all nations "shall call him blessed."

It is below the majesty of the scriptures, to make use of strong and lofty expressions to denote a very common and ordinary event, to which they cannot be applied without making great abatements. This is a fault men often fall into; but it would be very unjust to impute it to persons speaking under the immediate influence of the Spirit of

God. We may therefore lay it down as one good rule for underſtanding the prophetic writings, that whenever they riſe far above the ſubject they were treating of, into expreſſions literally applicable to the Meſſiah, and which, in their full extent, can belong to none but him, he is to be conſidered as chiefly in the view of the Spirit of God. Now, this being the caſe with my text, as I hope appears ſufficiently from what has been already ſaid, I ſhall conſider it as a noble and animated prophecy of the glory of his reign; which will be the more proper introduction to this day's work, as what we are now to be employed about is an eminent part of its accompliſhment.

In diſcourſing further on it at preſent, I ſhall circumſcribe the ſubject, and only,

I. Endeavor to open the import of this magnificent declaration, as underſtood of Chriſt, "His name ſhall endure "for ever," &c.

II. Make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and aſſiſtance in the preſent duty.

Firſt, then, let us endeavor to open the import of this magnificent declaration as underſtood of Chriſt—"His "name ſhall endure for ever," &c. And in the firſt place it carries in it an aſſurance of the greatneſs of his power as a Saviour, and the perfect ſecurity of all thoſe who put their truſt in him. The word name often ſignifies the excellence or perfection of the perſon named or referred to.—This is eſpecially the caſe in ſcripture, with reſpect to God, where his name is juſt his glory and all ſufficiency revealed. The name of the Lord is in many paſſages of equivalent meaning with the power of God: thus, Prov. xviii. 10. "The name of the Lord is a ſtrong tower; the "righteous runneth into it, and is ſafe." Pſalm xx. 1. "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of "the God of Jacob defend thee." This may with the greater propriety be applied to Chriſt, that you may know the name of Jeſus, was by the expreſs appointment of the angel of the Lord, given to him at his birth, to denote the great deliverance he was to work for ſinners, in ſaving them from their ſins. This is the great errand on which

the Son of God came into the world, 1 Tim. i. 15, "This "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of "whom I am chief." The success he should have in this work is often celebrated, as Isaiah liii. 10, 11. "Yet it "pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to "grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, "he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the "pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; "for he shall bear their iniquities." His power as a Saviour, to break the chains of Satan, and to deliver the captive soul, is frequently declared in the strongest terms, as Isaiah xlii. 6, 7, 8. "I the Lord have called thee in "righteousness, and I will hold thine hand, and will keep "thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a "light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring "out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in "darkness out of the prison-house. I am the Lord; that "is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, "neither my praise to graven images." Isaiah lxiii. 1. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed gar-"ments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, "travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak "in righteousness, mighty to save." This power of Christ to save, seems to be plainly called his name, 1 John iii. 23. "And this is his commandment, that we should be-"lieve on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one "another, as he gave us commandment." Thus it is reasonable to think, that the power of Christ as a Saviour is celebrated in our text, as what would ever remain a sure and plentiful source of salvation to mankind, and be ever depended upon and acknowledged as such, by all the redeemed.

This glory of Christ's name as a Saviour, has a particular respect to the wretched and deplorable state of those, who are the objects of his mercy, and that there are none beyond the reach of his power. That there is none so loaded with guilt or so stained with pollution, but he is able

to purchaſe their pardon, and to effect their deliverance. Perſons you know afflicted with inveterate and dangerous diſeaſes, are apt to hearken with eagerneſs to the name of an eminent phyſician, from whoſe ſkill they may entertain ſome hopes of recovery, and the greater and more illuſtrious his name is, they are apt to place the greater confidence in him. So when we hear that Chriſt's name ſhall endure for ever, it ſhould encourage all ſinners of whatever rank to fly to him, and to put their truſt in him. God reaſons thus in illuſtrating his own mercy, Iſa. i. 18, 19. "Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord; "though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as "ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as "wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye ſhall eat the "good of the land:" and to the ſame purpoſe, Iſa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous "man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, "and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, "for he will abundantly pardon." But he hath given us ſtill greater encouragement, by committing the work of our ſalvation to ſo glorious a perſon, in whoſe hand it cannot fail, Pſalm lxxxix. 18, 19. "For the Lord is our "defence; and the holy One of Iſrael is our King. Then "thou ſpakeſt in viſion to thy holy One, and ſaidſt, I have "laid help upon one that is mighty: I have exalted one "choſen out of the people." Iſaiah ix. 6. "For unto us "a child is born, unto us a ſon is given, and the govern-"ment ſhall be upon his ſhoulder; and his name ſhall "be called Wonderful, Counſellor, The Mighty God, "The everlaſting Father, The Prince of peace." Not to inſiſt on the many paſſages of the New-Teſtament, which point our attention to the power and dignity of Chriſt, I ſhall only mention, Heb. vii. 25. "Wherefore he is "able alſo to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto "God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion "for them."

I ſhall only further ſay, that the glory of Chriſt's name, as an almighty Saviour, may be conſidered in its ſuperior luſtre to every thing that might be ſuppoſed to come in competition with him, or pretend to be put in this place.

This is certainly the meaning of a great name, when applied to men. He is said to obtain the greatest name, who outstrips or eclipses others by the glory of his deeds; the fame must be the meaning of this passage, as applied to our Redeemer; "his name shall endure for ever." The names of others shall soon be lost. Their inferior brightness will soon decay: but his shall continue for ever with unfading and increasing lustre.

This, my brethren, is a circumstance that ought never to be omitted. We cannot honor Christ as an almighty Saviour, unless we believe and remember, that he is the only Saviour. There are some passages in the prophetic writings, in which God asserts his own incommunicable glory, in opposition to the vanities of the Gentiles, and that in language inimitably strong, Isa. xl. 17, 18. "All "nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted "to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then "will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare "unto him?" Isaiah xliii. 10, 11, 12, 13. "Ye are my "witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have "chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and under-"stand that I am he: before me there was no God form-"ed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I am the "Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour. I have de-"clared and have saved, and I have shewed, when there "was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my "witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Yea, before "the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deli-"ver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?" Hos. xiii. 4. "Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land "of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me: for "there is no saviour beside me." The same peculiar and exclusive honor belongs to Christ, as the hope of sinners, Acts iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for "there is none other name under heaven given among "men whereby we must be saved."

I might illustrate this sense of the passage before us, by shewing you that all the rites and ceremonies of the ancient dispensation, derived their efficacy from their relation to Christ. But I shall only tell you, that all the de-

pendance which you place upon any thing elſe for your acceptance with God, is an injury to the honor of your Redeemer; that all ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-dependance, to which there is in man by nature ſo ſtrong a tendency, obſcures the luſtre of that name which ſhall endure forever. That as he is able to ſave ſinners, to the uttermoſt, ſo they ſhall never obtain ſalvation, but by him. As it is he who laid the foundation of this great work, who carries it on through all the ſteps of its progreſs, and at laſt brings it to perfection, ſo he will have, and why ſhould he not have, the undivided glory.

2. This leads me to obſerve, that the magnificent declaration in the text, concerning Chriſt, implies the immortal honor and renown which he would acquire by the work of man's redemption. Every one knows, that in ſcripture ſtyle, to get a name is to acquire renown and glory, by ſome illuſtrious achievement; as 2 Sam. viii. 13. "And David gat him a name when he returned from "ſmiting of the Syrians in the valley of Salt, being "eighteen thouſand men."

And ſurely, my brethren, the undertaking of Chriſt was the moſt glorious in itſelf, the moſt arduous in its accompliſhment, the moſt bleſſed in its effects, and the moſt generous and diſintereſted in him, that can poſſibly be conceived. Think on this part of the ſubject, I beſeech you, with attention; and weigh the intimations we have of it in ſcripture. And for this purpoſe obſerve, that he acquired glory with God, with angels, and with men.

As the ſalvation of ſinners was a work in which the glory of God the Father was eminently illuſtrated, ſo he is repreſented as looking with the higheſt complacency on Chriſt, in the undertaking and accompliſhment of it. Thus Matth. iii. 17. "And lo, a voice from heaven, ſay-"ing, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſ-"ed." And again, at his transfiguration, Matth. xvii. 5. "And while he yet ſpake, behold, a bright cloud overſha-"dowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which "ſaid, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well "pleaſed, hear ye him." Iſ. xlii. 1. "Behold my ſer-"vant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my ſoul de-"lighteth: I have put my ſpirit upon him, he ſhall bring

" forth judgment to the Gentiles." We ſee alſo, that God is repreſented as having put the higheſt honor on the Redeemer, in reward of his ſufferings. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. " Wherefore God hath alſo highly exalted him, and given " him a name, which is above every name; that at the name " of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, " and things in earth, and things under the earth: and " that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt is " Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Heb. ii. 9. " But we ſee Jeſus, who was made a little lower than the " angels, for the ſuffering of death, crowned with glory " and honor; that he by the grace of God ſhould taſte " death for every man." See alſo Heb. xii. 2. " Look- " ing unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith; " who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the " croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right " hand of the throne of God."

I am ſenſible, my brethren, that this delight and approbation, which the father is repreſented as expreſſing in the undertaking of the Son, is a ſubject of the moſt elevated nature, on which we ought to think and ſpeak with the utmoſt veneration, and with the greateſt reſerve. But ſince he hath revealed, it is our duty to improve it. Does it not carry your thoughts naturally to that expreſſion we find uſed in ſcripture, at the finiſhing of the material creation, mentioned at the end of every day's work, and repeated on a review of the whole, Gen. i. 31. " And " God ſaw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it " was very good."

We muſt needs conceive, the omnipotent Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, as poſſeſſed, not only of abſolute and unchangeable perfection, but of infinite and inconceivable felicity. And may we not, muſt we not conceive, that this felicity conſiſts both in the contemplation and exerciſe of all his glorious attributes, and in nothing more than in the redemption of ſinners, in which his power, wiſdom, holineſs, juſtice and mercy, are ſeverally and jointly ſo conſpicuouſly diſplayed. Nay, may we not venture, with reverence, further to ſay, that the three perſons in the Trinity, by their diſtinct properties, and pecu-

liar agency, receive and impart everlasting delight to one another, in their ineffable communion! The eternal word is represented as saying, Prov. viii. 30. "Then was "I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was dai-"ly his delight, rejoicing always before him."

(2.) The Redeemer acquired immortal renown among the angels, and the whole celestial host. This we may speak of with abundance of certainty, and with yet clearer comprehension. Doubtless their happiness consists in the vision and contemplation of an infinite God. And therefore the manifestation and exercise of the divine perfections, both in Providence and grace, administer to them matter of continual and increasing delight. There is a beautiful representation of their employment, Is. vi. 1, 2, 3. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the "Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his "train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: "each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, "with twain he covered his feet, and with twain did he "fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, "holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his "glory."

Now there is no reason to doubt that the work of redemption, in all its parts, in which they themselves have an inferior employment, as ministring spirits, under the dominion of the uncreated angel of the covenant, must be a source of the purest felicity, and a subject of the most elevated praise. In a particular manner, the assumption of our nature into a personal union with the divine. You see how they sing praises at the birth of the Saviour, Luke ii. 13, 14. "And suddenly there was with the angel a "multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and say-"ing, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, "good will toward men."

The humiliation, sufferings and death of God's eternal Son, his victory upon the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and triumph over principalities and powers, that is to say, the revolted angels, must have often laid these servants of the living God, prostrate in adoration. This is not a matter of conjecture, but clearly revealed; the

whole plan of redemption being called a myſtery, which the angels deſire to penetrate, 1 Peter i. 10, 11, 12. "Of "which ſalvation the prophets have inquired, and ſearched "diligently, who propheſied of the grace that ſhould come "unto you: ſearching what, or what manner of time the "Spirit of Chriſt which was in them did ſignify, when it "teſtified beforehand the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glo-"ry that ſhould follow: unto whom it was revealed, that "not unto themſelves, but unto us, they did miniſter the "things which are now reported unto you by them that "have preached the goſpel unto you, with the holy Ghoſt "ſent down from heaven; which things the angels deſire "to look into."

Realize theſe great truths to yourſelves, my brethren. What think you were the views of the innumerable hoſts of cherubim and ſeraphim, when ſome of them conducted the aſcending Saviour, and others received him, when he entered within the veil! What think you were their views when they beheld the Mediator, God Man, exalted at the right hand of God, and had a new object of adoration, bearing the ſcars of his ſufferings, and known by the print of the nails, and by his bleeding temples? Hebrews i. 6. "And again, when he bringeth in the firſt-begotten into "the world, he ſaith, And let all the angels of God wor-"ſhip him." Or, when they ſaw the dominion and power with which he was inveſted as King of kings, and Lord of lords, 1 Peter iii. 22. "Who is gone into heaven, "and is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, "and powers being made ſubject unto him."

This renown of the Saviour muſt have been much greater among them, if it is true what many intelligent divines have ſuppoſed, that by the ſame glorious undertaking by which he redeemed elect ſinners, he eſtabliſhed and confirmed the obedient angels in a ſtate of holineſs and happineſs. I ſhall only further ſay, that we are expreſsly told, the adminiſtration of divine grace, or the government and preſervation of the church of Chriſt, is a continued illuſtration to the ſpirits above of his Father's wiſdom, Eph. iii. 10. "To the intent that now, unto the principalities and "powers in heavenly places, might be known by the

"church the manifold wiſdom of God." Agreeably to this we find that, in the book of Revelation, which opens the great ſcenes of Providence in the Church militant, there are ſeveral viſions in which the angels are repreſented as uniting their praiſes with redeemed ſinners, and directing their worſhip to the ſame great object. This leads me to obſerve,

(3.) That the Saviour acquired immortal renown among ſinners of mankind. If the angels who were either ſpectators only, or at moſt but partial ſharers in redeeming grace, do yet hold him in the higheſt honor, what is, and muſt be the ſenſe of gratitude which dwells in the heart of a pardoned ſinner? Oh, my brethren, how many circumſtances concur to bind the heart of the believer in eternal bonds of gratitude to Chriſt! Who can conceive or expreſs the debt of the ſinner to the Savicur! He is redeemed from everlaſting deſtruction, he is ſaved from wrath through him. Whoever is humbled, through fear of the vengeance of a holy and jealous God, what fervent love will he bear to him, who hath wrought his deliverance, who hath purchaſed his pardon? If he is filled with a deep ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, of his aggravated and inexcuſable provocations, with what rapture muſt he look upon that Saviour, who forgave him graciouſly, and loved him freely? Who is not moved with that inimitable picture of penitent love, when Mary Magdalene came in as it is related, Luke vii. 37, 38. "And, behold, a wo-"man in the city, which was a ſinner, when ſhe knew "that Jeſus ſat at meat in the Phariſee's houſe, brought "an alabaſter-box of ointment, and ſtood at his feet be-"hind him weeping, and began to waſh his feet with tears, "and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kiſſ-"ed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."— And how juſt and proper that reflection of our Saviour in the 47th verſe, "Wherefore, I ſay unto thee, Her ſins, "which are many, are forgiven; for ſhe loved much: "but to whom little is forgiven, the ſame loveth little." The believer's eſteem and gratitude muſt be greatly increaſed by conſidering the unſpeakable coſt at which his deliverance was bought, the amazing, and affecting ſuffer-

ings which the Redeemer endured in his room. When he follows the patient and immaculate Saviour, by the eye of faith, from his inward anguiſh in the garden, to his ſhameful ſufferings on the accurſed tree—with what relenting of heart, will he view that bleſſed head crowned with thorns, that ſacred body nailed to the croſs?—And when he carries forward his views to the glory and happineſs prepared for him, in the Redeemer's preſence above, what is the ſum of his obligations? What bounds can be ſet to this conqueror's renown? In what better way can we expreſs this, than by repeating and adopting theſe animating ſongs of praiſe, which are now making a great part of the worſhip of Heaven, Rev. v. 11, 12, 13, 14. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels "round about the throne, and the beaſts, and the elders: "and the number of them was ten thouſand times ten "thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands; ſaying with a "loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain to re- "ceive power, and riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and "honor, and glory, and bleſſing. And every creature "which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the "earth, and ſuch as are in the ſea, and all that are in them, "heard I ſaying, Bleſſing, and honor, and glory, and "power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the throne, and un- "to the Lamb, for ever and ever. And the four beaſts "ſaid, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down "and worſhipped him that liveth for ever and ever."—And Rev. vii. 9, 10, 11.

3. In the laſt place, the magnificent declaration concerning Chriſt in the text, implies the ſtability and perpetuity of his kingdom. The glorious promiſes made to the houſe and family of David, have their chief and full accompliſhment in Chriſt the ſon of David. The earthly kingdom erected in that family, has long ago been deſtroyed, but the Redeemer's ſpiritual kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom, and his dominion ſhall have no end. This was the promiſe of the Father to the Meſſiah, Pſalm lxxxix. 36, 37. "His ſeed ſhall endure for ever, and his throne "as the ſun before me. It ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever as "the moon, and as a faithful witneſs in heaven. Selah."

It is one great end of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, to perpetuate the Redeemer's name, "as often as ye "eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew forth the "Lord's death till he come," and it is a noble and reviving object of faith, that we know that his kingdom ſhall ſtand faſt forever. Hell itſelf may rage, and the princes of this world may combine to ſhake his glorious throne, but he that ſits in heaven ſhall laugh, the king of Zion ſhall hold their impotent attempts in deriſion. He ſhall maintain his intereſt in ſpite of all the efforts of his numerous and inveterate enemies. He hath often done ſo already, and ſhall continue to do ſo, till the end of time. Rev. xvii. 14.

I proceed now to make ſome practical application of what hath been ſaid. And,

Firſt, Let us adore the wiſdom and the power of Chriſt.

My brethren, When we conſider the ſimplicity of the goſpel, and the ſcandal of the croſs; when we conſider the whole ſyſtem of the doctrine according to godlineſs, and ſalvation by grace, how directly contrary it is to the pride of our nature, how many attempts have been, and continue to be made in every age, to ſuppreſs it by violence, to blacken it by ſlander, and to adulterate it by mixture; it is a ſtanding miracle that it has been able to hold its ground. Whoever will reflect either upon the preſent ſtate, or the paſt hiſtory of the church of Chriſt, muſt be obliged to ſay, that our faith does not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God. I muſt not omit to ſay that, we are perhaps as much indebted in this nation, to the goodneſs of Providence in this reſpect, as any corner of the earth; and I cannot but be pleaſed with the choice which our Fathers made, of an emblem and motto for the church of Scotland, a buſh burning, but not conſumed. Let us rejoice in the faith, that the prince of the kings of the earth, who hath hitherto maintained his truths and intereſt againſt all the powers and cunning of earthly policy, will continue to preſerve them, and that "his name ſhall endure forever: his name ſhall be con-"tinued as long as the ſun: and men ſhall be bleſſed in "him; all nations ſhall call him bleſſed."

2. You may learn from what hath been said, the guilt and danger of the enemies of Christ; of all those who set light by the glory of his person, and are unwilling to be indebted to the riches of his grace. I would willingly aspire to the character which the apostle Paul assumes to himself, 2 Cor. ii. 17. "For we are not as many, which "corrupt the word God: but as of sincerity, but as of "God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." Christ is the only foundation of a sinner's hope, 1 Cor. iii. 11. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, "which is Jesus Christ." There may be a form of godliness; nay, there may be an ostentatious parade of human virtue, but there can be nothing of the spirit and power of true religion, without a clear discovery and sincere confession of our lost and depraved state by nature, without a believing application to the mercy of God, through the blood of the atonement. Think not I beseech you, to frustrate the word of God. The following testimony, comes from the Amen, the true and faithful witness, John xiv. 6. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no "man cometh unto the Father but by me." If so great honor is put upon the Redeemer by God the Father, and by his holy angels, how unspeakably dangerous must it be, for sinners to despise him. You can never despise this ordinance of God for salvation, but from the greatest ignorance of yourselves. My heart bleeds to think of the delusion of the despisers of the gospel. What views can you have of the immaculate nature and holy law of God, if you trust in yourselves that you are righteous? What experience have you of the stability of these resolutions that have been taken, as in your strength? How weak and defective is that virtue, which is founded only on human prudence, or motives of present conveniency? One believing view of a Saviour on the cross, will have a more powerful influence in mortifying corruptions, than all other arguments whatever. One fervent prayer, urged in the name of Christ, will be more effectual for your preservation, than a thousand merely human resolutions.—Obey this salutary counsel, John xv. 4. "Abide in me, "and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,

" except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye " abide in me."

3. From what has been ſaid, let me beſeech you to try your title to ſet down at the Lord's table. This ordinance was expreſsly inſtituted for putting honor on the Redeemer's name. He is the ſum and ſubſtance of it; his death and ſufferings, are the immediate ſubject of it. Have you then, my brethren, a high and inward eſteem of his perſon; a deep ſenſe of gratitude for his mercy; an entire and unſhaken reliance on his grace and power? Can you call the Searcher of hearts to witneſs, that you unfeignedly approve of this way of ſalvation, by which God is glorified, and the ſinner abaſed? Are you not aſhamed to profeſs it? And while others are ready to deſpiſe it, are you willing to glory in it? Does it pleaſe you to hear that the Saviour's name ſhall endure forever? Is it with holy triumph, you reflect, that the glory of his kingdom ſhall be unchangeable, and his power to eternity itſelf? If this is your diſpoſition, I hope you will come with acceptance to his table; and I would flatter myſelf with the pleaſing expectation, that many of this day's worſhippers, ſhall be everlaſting monuments of their Redeemer's power; that they ſhall be happy ſubjects of his grace, and taſte of the conſolations of his goſpel on earth, and be heirs and partakers of his glory in heaven.

4. I would improve this ſubject, by earneſtly beſeeching every ſinner to embrace this ſalvation, and enliſt himſelf under the banner of this renowned Saviour. There are no doubt, many within theſe walls, who are ſtill in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity. O that the Redeemer would glorify his own power in their conviction and their ſalvation. " Gird on thy ſword upon thy thigh, " O moſt mighty." Are there not ſome in this aſſembly, who are ſenſible they are lying under a load of unforgiven guilt; that they are ſtill ſlaves to habitual ſin? Does not the very ſacred action we are going about, fill you with fear, that you are far from the ſtate and temper of God's children? Is not the old nature ſo ſtrong in you, that you have good reaſon to ſuſpect you have never yet put on the new? Let me beſeech and exhort you, to believe in the

name of the Son of God. His merit is of infinite value; his power is of infinite efficacy. Many notorious ſinners have been from age to age, the happy witneſſes of both. Nothing in your condition ought to be a diſcouragement to you from applying to this all-ſufficient Saviour, he invites you by me, or rather I invite you by his commiſſion, and in his own terms, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give "you reſt." Iſaiah lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirſteth, "come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: "come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk "without money and without price." John vi. 37. "Him "that cometh to me I will in no wiſe caſt out." How ſhall I urge your compliance? is not this name ſo powerful that you may ſafely put your truſt in it? Are you not deſirous that your converſion to God ſhould illuſtrate it and make it glorious? I ſhall leave the matter with you after making this remark, that in vain do his enemies oppoſe him; in vain do ſinners deſpiſe him. He is getting him a name by the preaching of the goſpel. It is ſtill ſerving its purpoſe, for the calling and confirmation of the veſſels of mercy, for aggravating the guilt, and increaſing the condemnation of the obſtinate and diſobedient, Luke xx. 17, 18. "And he beheld them, and ſaid, "What is this then, that is written, The ſtone which the "builders rejected, the ſame is become the head of the "corner? Whoſoever ſhall fall upon that ſtone ſhall be "broken; but on whomſoever it ſhall fall, it will grind "him to powder."

5. In the laſt place, you may learn from what hath been ſaid, the wiſdom of God, in the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper, and what ought to be your employment at his table. How wiſely fitted is this ordinance to keep up the remembrance of Chriſt as a Saviour, as a ſuffering dying Saviour. Perhaps no one circumſtance has contributed more to preſerve the pure uncorrupted doctrine of the goſpel, than the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper. It ſets the truth before our eyes, while the words of the inſtitution repeats it in our ears, 1 Cor. xi. 24. "This is my body, "which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of

" me." And verſe 25th, " This cup is the New Teſta-
" ment in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in
" remembrance of me." Profeſſing Chriſtians, but of worldly minds, may be aſhamed of the croſs; ſelf-righteous perſons may put ſomething elſe in the room of the croſs; perverſe diſputers may oppoſe it, or keep it out of their writings; and erroneous teachers may keep it out of their ſermons; but there is no keeping it out of the ſacrament of his ſupper. Under this auſpicious banner, the name of Chriſt has been ſpread to the moſt diſtant nations, and handed down from the moſt diſtant ages, and ſo it ſhall continue till he come again, " for as often as ye eat this
" bread," &c. How then ought ye to be employed, in a thankful and joyful acceptance of ſalvation through his blood, in the lively exerciſe of faith in his power, in deriving from his fulneſs every thing neceſſary for your ſupport under temptation or trial; and in fervent prayer, that his name may be hallowed, his kingdom may come, and his will may be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.—Amen and Amen.

THE PETITIONS OF THE INSINCERE UNAVAILING.

SERMON 36.

PSALM lxvi. 18.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

MY BRETHREN,

THERE is not, I think, a more ſtriking light in which we can conſider an aſſembly of profeſſing chriſtians, than as united in their common relation to God, and upon an equal footing, as to outward privileges, but very different, as to their inward character. This difference ſhall only be completely manifeſted in the final deciſion of their ſtate at the laſt day. The mixture of ſaints and ſinners muſt continue till that time, when there ſhall be an eternal ſeparation of the precious from the vile, of the ſheep from the goats. Muſt then, all things continue in ſuſpence and uncertainty till the great day? Is there no way by which we can judge, at preſent, what will be the event at that intereſting period?

What is now the inward temper, or the ſpiritual ſtate, and what ſhall be the eternal condition of every perſon here preſent is perfectly known to God, the ſearcher of all hearts. It cannot be known indeed, with any certainty, by his fellow ſinners, but it may be known in a great

meaſure, by every one with regard to himſelf. It may be known with ſuch a degree of evidence as to deliver him from diſtreſſing anxiety, and even to fill him with the moſt joyful hope and expectation. Is not this ſufficient? and ought it not to excite every one of us to a ſerious and impartial trial of that great queſtion, in which we have no leſs than an infinite concern. This ought to be our care, in a particular manner, when we have in view to make a near and ſolemn approach to God, in his ſanctuary on earth, becauſe his acceptance of our worſhip in the body, is an earneſt and pledge of his final approbation, as appears from the words of the text, "If I re-"gard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," and likewiſe from another paſſage, John ix. 31. "Now, "we know that God heareth not ſinners: but if any man "be a worſhipper of God, and doeth his will, him he "heareth."

This Pſalm was compoſed, in all probability by the Pſalmiſt David, though ſome are of a contrary opinion, and attribute it to one of the prophets, after the captivity. The inſpired author celebrates the goodneſs of God in ſome ſignal and national deliverance, and towards the cloſe of the Pſalm, takes particular notice of the diſtinguiſhing kindneſs of God to himſelf, as in Pſalm lxvi. 16. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare "what he hath done for my ſoul." He then conſiders the countenance and acceptance he had met with from God, as an evidence of his own ſincerity in the 18th and 19th verſes, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will "not hear me; but verily God hath heard me; he hath "attended to the voice of my prayer." I cannot at this time take in the whole compaſs of this ſubject, or conſider how the one of theſe aſſertions is related to the other; but as the firſt of them contains an intereſting truth of itſelf, and very proper for the trial of our ſtate—I ſhall endeavor, through divine aſſiſtance, to illuſtrate it, in the following method,

I. I ſhall conſider what is implied in regarding iniquity in the heart.

II. What is to be underſtood by God's not hearing ſuch perſons. And,

III. I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place, then, let us conſider what is implied in regarding iniquity in the heart. And I think it is plain, that theſe words do not directly point at open, ſcandalous and profane ſinners, who have burſt every bond, and look with diſdain and defiance in the face of every reprover. There are too many of this character, my brethren, who fall under the deſcription of the prophet Jeremiah, ch. xliv. ver. 16 and firſt clauſe of the 17th, and who practically ſay, "As for the word that thou haſt ſpoken "unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken "unto thee. But we will certainly do whatſoever thing "goeth forth out of our own mouth." To theſe I ſhall ſpeak in the application of the ſubject, as there is no doubt that they regard iniquity in the heart, ſince they openly and obſtinately practice it in the life. But certainly the words of the text do chiefly relate to thoſe whoſe characters are more doubtful, both to others and to themſelves. Many there have been in every age, and there are many amongſt us, who maintain their characters before men; but when weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary, ſhall be found wanting; but, at the ſame time, by the power of ſelf-deceit, they are ready to ſay, they ſhall have peace, though they walk after the imagination of their own hearts. For undeceiving all ſuch perſons, and for the trial of others, that they that are approved may be made manifeſt, let me beſeech your attention to the following particulars.

1. They regard iniquity in their hearts, who practiſe it ſecretly, who are under reſtraint from the world, but are not poſſeſſed of an habitual fear of the omniſcient God, the ſearcher of all hearts, and from whoſe eyes there is no covering of thick darkneſs where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves. Jer. xxiii. 24. "Can any hide "himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee him? ſaith "the Lord: do not I fill heaven and earth? ſaith the

Men may habitually indulge themſelves in ſenſuality of heart, when they have little or no opportunity of giving the rein to ſenſuality in practice. They may pleaſe themſelves with the imagination or expectation of worldly greatneſs, or worldly delights. Such things may be the theme of their meditation, and the objects of their ſinful affections, although they ſhall never come into their poſſeſſion. Their ſenſuality of heart may diſcover itſelf by impatient complaints of their own ſtate, which has not given them the means of indulgence, or by envious repining at the outward proſperity of others, who are more liberally provided for. Nay, I would ſay the ſame thing of thoſe who have the means of gratification, and yet are uſually ſober, if their reſtraint is owing to no better principle than the fear of ſickneſs, or the fear of man.

Once more, men may indulge themſelves in malice againſt others, although it be chiefly confined to the ſecret working of their hearts. Prudence or cowardice may hinder men from doing miſchief, even when they are full of inward malice. Envy, that corroding, waſting worm, chiefly preys upon the heart. Men may rejoice at the calamities of others, or indulge reſentment of ſuppoſed injuries, which is never carried into effect. All ſuch, my brethren, regard iniquity in their heart, and are living in the wilful and deliberate breach of the law of God, which is pure and ſpiritual, and hath the heart as its principal object. Matth. v. 21, 22. "Ye have heard that it was "ſaid by them of old time, Thou ſhalt not kill; and, "whoſoever ſhall kill, ſhall be in danger of the judgment. "But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever is angry with his "brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judg- "ment: and whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, Raca, "ſhall be in danger of the counſel: but whoſoever ſhall "ſay, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of hell-fire."

3. They regard iniquity in the heart, who reflect upon paſt ſins with delight, or without ſincere humiliation of mind. Perhaps our real diſpoſition, both towards ſin and duty, may be as certainly diſcovered by the ſtate of our minds after, as in the time of action. The ſtrength and ſuddenneſs of temptation may betray even a good man

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4. They regard iniquity in the heart, who look upon the ſins of others with approbation, or indeed, who can behold them without grief. Sin is ſo abominable a thing, ſo diſhonoring to God, and ſo deſtructive to the ſouls of men, that no real Chriſtian can witneſs it without concern. Hence it is ſo frequently taken notice of in ſcripture, as the character of a ſervant of God, that he mourns for the ſins of others, Pſal. cxix. 136, 158, "Rivers of water run "down mine eyes: becauſe they keep not thy law. I be-"held the tranſgreſſors, and was grieved: becauſe they "kept not thy word." See alſo the language of the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xiii. 17. "But if ye will not hear "it, my ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places for your pride; "and mine eye ſhall weep ſore, and run down with tears, "becauſe the Lord's flock is carried away captive." 2

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Peter ii. 7, 8, "And delivered juſt Lot, vexed with the "filthy converſation of the wicked: (for that righteous "man dwelling among them, in ſeeing and hearing, "vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day with their un-"lawful deeds)." Have we then among us any, my brethren, who can look upon the ſins of others with complacency or approbation, who excuſe or palliate, who juſtify or defend them, how different is their temper from that of the ſcripture ſaints juſt now referred to? Whatever outward regularity they may poſſeſs or pretend to, it is plain they are of the number of thoſe who regard iniquity in the heart. To ſome ſins their own nature may not prompt them, from others, the fear of man may reſtrain them; but the holy ſpirit ſurely never has reformed them. It is an infallible maxim, that no man can think lightly of ſin in others, who has an unfeigned hatred of it in himſelf.

This will hold with equal or with greater ſtrength, as to thoſe who make the ſins of others the ſubject of their mirth and entertainment. The wiſe man tells us, Prov. xiv. 9, "Fools make a mock of ſin." And the obſervation will hold equally true, whether we conſider the ſin committed, or the danger of the ſinner. Is there any thing we ſhould hate more than what is ſo offenſive to God; of which he hath expreſſed his deteſtation? And muſt he not regard iniquity in the heart, who can find pleaſure in what ſhould be viewed by every Chriſtian with horror? And what name does he deſerve, who can make himſelf merry with the everlaſting perdition of his fellow-creatures? We have the greateſt reaſon to lament the prevalence of ſin amongſt us, and the boldneſs of ſinners; and little leſs, to lament the reception which both ſin and ſinners meet with among thoſe, of whom better things might have been expected.

5. In the laſt place, I ſuſpect that they regard ſin in the heart, who are backward to bring themſelves to the trial, and who are not truly willing, that God himſelf would ſearch and try them. Sin often lurks ſecretly, and in diſguiſe. He is a ſtranger to religion, who does not know this from experience. Hear the language of the Pſalmiſt,

Pſal. xix. 12. "Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe "thou me from ſecret faults." Pſ. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search "me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know "my thoughts, and ſee if there be any wicked way in "me, and lead me in the way everlaſting."

If any, therefore, are unwilling to be tried, if they are backward to ſelf-examination, it is an evidence of a ſtrong and powerful attachment to ſin. It can proceed from nothing but from a ſecret dread of ſome diſagreeable diſcovery of the detection of ſome luſt, which they cannot conſent to forſake. The force of conſcience is ſuch, that ſome deception is neceſſary to keep the ſinner in peace with himſelf. Too much light would either debar him from his delights, or poiſon the enjoyment of them. This is ſtrongly deſcribed by our Saviour, John iii. 20. "For "every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh "to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved."

We proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was to ſhow what is to be underſtood by God's not hearing thoſe who regard iniquity in their hearts. This expreſſion of God's not hearing them, may be conſidered very generally, as ſignifying that they are not, nor while they continue in that temper can be, the objects of his favor; he will not remember them with the love which he beareth to his choſen. But as the expreſſion is uſed in ſome particular and diſtinct ſignifications in ſcripture, which will merit our attention, I ſhall briefly mention the chief of them, which ſeem to be the four following.

1. He will not hear them when they cry to him for deliverance from affliction. I take this to be at leaſt one thing, if not the main thing, intended by the Pſalmiſt in the paſſage where the text lies. After giving praiſe to God for a ſignal deliverance, he draws this comfortable concluſion from it, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the "Lord will not hear me; but verily God hath heard me: "he hath attended to the voice of my prayer." It is one "of the characters, as well as one of the privileges of the children of God, that they fly to him as their refuge in diſtreſs; and he hath given his gracious promiſe, that he

will hear them in mercy, Pſ. xci. 15. "He ſhall call upon "me, and I will anſwer him: I will be with him in trou- "ble, I will deliver him, and honor him." Pſalm l. 15. "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver "thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me." But thoſe who regard iniquity in their hearts, have no reaſon to expect that God will hear them in this ſenſe. They are liable to the calamities of human life; they are liable to the ſtrokes of God's righteous Providence: but they have no title to go to him for relief. Every affliction carries in it the ſeverity of a judge, without any mixture of the mercy of a father. It is true, that wicked men do ſometimes cry to God in diſtreſs, but not in the ſpirit of his children; and as we learn from this paſſage, their prayers do not find acceptance with him.

There are three different objects of deſire to a good man, while in affliction: the divine preſence to ſupport him under it; the ſanctified uſe of it, for the improvement of the ſpiritual life; and in due time, compleat deliverance from it. The two firſt, he that regards iniquity in his heart, will hardly aſk; and the laſt he ſhall not be able to obtain. The prayer of one unacquainted with God, is little better than the howling of deſpair and terror, without any mixture of filial confidence. Hoſea, vii. 14. "And "they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they "howled upon their beds." As to the ſanctified uſe of their ſufferings, they neither aſk nor receive it; on the contrary, they are commonly made worſe by their ſufferings, as earthen veſſels are but hardened in the fire. And as to deliverance from ſuffering, they ſhall never obtain more than perhaps a temporary ſuſpenſion of outward ſtrokes, till they fill up the meaſure of their iniquities, and be ripe for final deſtruction.

I cannot help, juſt hinting in this place, that when God viſits his children's faults with rods, and their ſins with chaſtiſements, till they forſake their ſins by true repentance, he will not hear them. If they have departed from the paths of truth and righteouſneſs, if they have taken of the accurſed thing between him and them, there cannot be peace, Iſaiah lix. 1. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not

" ſhortened, that it cannot ſave; neither his ear heavy, " that it cannot hear." The very intention of affliction to the children of God, is to ſeparate them from ſin, and it muſt continue till it produces its effect. What he ſays of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, in general, is but an emblem of the manner in which he will treat every particular perſon of the true Iſrael, Iſaiah i. 25. " And I will turn " my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy droſs, " and take away all thy tin:"

2. He will not hear them, when they intercede for others. It is in this ſenſe, that the word is uſed in the goſpel according to John ix. 31. " Now, we know that " God heareth not ſinners: but if any man be a worſhip- " per of God, and doth his will, him he heareth." We are expreſsly taught by the apoſtle James, that it is the prayer of faith, and the prayer of the righteous that hath power with God, James v. 15, 16. " And the prayer of " faith ſhall ſave the ſick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up; " and if he have committed ſins, they ſhall be forgiven " him. Confeſs your faults one to another, and pray one " for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fer- " vent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." I am ſenſible, my brethren, that this will ſeem of very little moment to many, or probably to the greateſt part of thoſe, who regard iniquity in their hearts. Not much accuſtomed to the exerciſe of prayer for themſelves, it will make but a light impreſſion on them, to be told that they will not be heard in their interceſſion for others. The truth is, many, if they would attend to it, carry their own condemnation in themſelves, from this very circumſtance. Conſcious that they have little intereſt at the throne of grace, they ſeldom think of employing it at all. But conſidering that there is ſcarcely any perſon wholly unrelated to others, and that many have occaſion, from time to time, to ſee thoſe to whom they are united by the moſt tender ties, lying under the preſſure of affliction, it ought to cover them with confuſion, that they know not what it is to look to God, as the hearer of prayer, and to lend that help, which they may ſhortly require. When we ſee one member of a family lying under the rod, and a profane

husband or wife, parent or child, standing by in hopeless distress, and prayerless tears, it is hard to say which of the two is the greater object of compassion.

And what an incitement should it be to those, who are often called to the duty of intercession, either from their office or their character, to walk circumspectly, that they may not mar their confidence in God. Let them guard with double diligence against any thing that is provoking to God. Let them strive to keep clear their interest in his favor, lest they should at once wound their peace and destroy their usefulness; for if they regard iniquity in their heart, the Lord will not hear them.

3. He will not hear them when they draw near to him in worship. This also, is often the meaning of the expression in scripture, Isaiah i. 14, 15. "Your new moons, "and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a "trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when "ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from "you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: "your hands are full of blood." There are many other passages to the same purpose, particularly that of Solomon, Prov. xv. 8. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomina-"tion to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his "delight." The Psalmist was so sensible of this, that he says, Psalm v. 4, 5, 6, 7. "For thou art not a God that "hath pleasure in wickedness; neither shall evil dwell "with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou "hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them "that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and "deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into thy "house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear "will I worship toward thy holy temple."

This ought to make a deep and serious impression on your minds. There are but too many who, though they live in the practice of sin and regard iniquity in their hearts, do yet continue their outward attendance on the ordinances of divine institution, and at stated times lay hold of the seals of God's covenant. Shall they find any acceptance with him? No. He counts it a profane mockery; he counts it a sacrilegious usurpation, Psalm l.

16, 17. "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou "to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take "my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest in- "struction, and castest my words behind thee." Shall they have any comfort in it? No, unless in so far as in righteous judgment he suffers them to be deceived, and they are deceived, and most unhappy they, who lie longest under the delusion, Psalm l. 21. "These things hast "thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I "was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove "thee, and set them in order before thine eyes." Shall they have any benefit by it? No, instead of appeasing his wrath, it provokes his vengeance. Instead of enlightening their minds, it blinds their eyes. Instead of sanctifying their nature, it hardens their hearts. See a description of those who had been long favored with outward privileges, and gloried in them, John xii. 39, 40, "There- "fore they could not believe, because that Esaias said "again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their "heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor un- "derstand with their heart, and be converted, and I should "heal them." So that nothing is more essential to an acceptable approach to God, in the duties of his worship in general, and particularly to receiving the seals of his covenant, than a thorough and universal separation from all known sin, Job xi. 13, 14. "If thou prepare thine "heart, and stretch out thine hands towards him; if ini- "quity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not "wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles."

4. He will not hear them when they cry for mercy at last. Sooner or later the sinner's eyes shall be opened. Sooner or later he shall be convinced of the folly of his miserable choice. Many of those who regard iniquity in their hearts, sleep in security, and flatter themselves with mistaken hopes; but, Gal. vi. 7, "Be not deceived: God "is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall "he also reap." From the account given by our Saviour, it would appear that the final sentence shall, in many instances, be matter of surprise as well as terror to the sinner, Matt. vii. 22, 23, "Many will say to me in that day,

" Lord, Lord, have we not prophefied in thy name? and " in thy name have caft out devils? and in thy name " done many wonderful works? And then will I profefs " unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that " work iniquity." Nay, perhaps we may fay that to fome, the day of God's mercy may be over before the clofe of life; and they may find no place for repentance, though they may feek it carefully, and with tears. Not but that wherever there is true penitence, even at the eleventh hour, forgivenefs will be the effect; but we may juftly fuppofe that there may be a defpairing cry for mercy, from the apprehenfions of impending judgment, without any thorough conviction of fin. The reception that fuch will meet with, and the reafon upon which it is founded, is repreſented in the ſtrongeſt language, Prov. i. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, " Becaufe I have called, and ye refufed; I " have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; " but ye have fet at nought all my counfel, and would " none of my reproof: I alfo will laugh at your calamity; " I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear " cometh as defolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a " whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon " you: then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not an- " fwer; they ſhall feek me early, but they ſhall not find " me."

I proceed now to make fome practical improvement of this fubject for your inſtruction and direction. And, 1. Suffer me to ſpeak a little to thoſe who live in the open habitual practice of groſs fin. It grieves me to think, my brethren, that any ſuch ſhould be found or ſuppoſed in this worſhipping aſſembly. It diſtreſſes me ſtill more, to think that any ſuch ſhould have the preſumption to aſk, or the art to obtain permiſſion, and the dreadful hardineſs to ſit down at the Lord's table. I ſhall deſcribe you not by your names, which are known to men, but your characters and hearts, which are open before God. Swearers and profaners of Jehovah's name, deſpiſers of his Sabbaths, ſcorners of ſacred things, neglecters of prayer, ſons of violence, midnight rioters, beaſtly drunkards, unclean

fornicators, takers and holders of unjuſt gain, liars and ſlanderers, hard-hearted oppreſſors, and whoſoever liveth under the dominion of known ſin. Is the nature of God ſo holy, is his law ſo ſpiritual, is his judgment ſo ſevere, that thoſe who but regard iniquity in their hearts, ſhall inevitably periſh; then how ſhall you eſcape the damnation of hell? Is memory ſo unfaithful, as not now to bring your ſins to remembrance? Is conſcience ſo ſeared as not to charge you with the guilt? Can you doubt the being, do you not feel the preſence, do you not fear the judgment of God? "The wicked ſhall be turned in-" to hell, and all the nations that forget God; for Tophet " is ordained of old," &c.

Oh, that it would pleaſe God, by his omnipotent grace, to reach your hearts, to ſhake your confidence, to humble you to the duſt. I call God to record, that you have received warning. I know that you may deſpiſe it; I am afraid that many will do ſo. Away to your cups, away to the bleſſed ſtage, that dear friend to virtue; away to your merry, ſocial life, drink confuſion to your preachers, and pour forth every term of reproach that your little wit can ſuggeſt, againſt theſe poor prieſt-ridden creatures, who are afraid of their miniſter's reproof. Alas, alas! when the king of terrors, on his pale horſe, ſhall make his approach, you will be of another mind, unleſs perhaps, as it often happens, you meet with a ſudden call, an immediate tranſlation from the fire of luſt to the fire of hell.

2. Let me intreat you, my dear brethren, from what has been ſaid, to ſearch and try yourſelves, whether you regard iniquity in your hearts, or not. This is the rather neceſſary, as you have in view an immediate and ſolemn appeal to God, that you are ſincere in his covenant. Does the fear of the Lord poſſeſs you in ſecret, as well as in public? Are you willing that it ſhould be ſo? Is it your daily ſtudy, and is it the ſubject of your daily prayer, to have a deeper and more lively impreſſion of his preſence upon your ſpirits? Is it truly matter of comfort to you, when you are delivered from the fear of human cenſure, or deſire of human approbation? Have you ever got above both in your experience, and do you not wiſh to maintain

the superiority? If it is so, happy, happy are you indeed; and may the Lord himself lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Do you know what it is to mourn over secret sins, the vanity of your minds, the worldliness of your affections? And do you truly make conscience of keeping the heart with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life? I will not ask because I know you cannot deny, that you have had many sinful thoughts, in breach of every command of God. But are they approved, or abhorred? are they submitted to, or resisted? are they now recollected with pleasure, with indifference, or with shame?

What are your thoughts with regard to the sins of others? Have you ever grieved for them in truth? Do not think that I am leading you to ostentation. I do not ask you whether you have openly testified against them, or honestly reproved them; because, though these are both important and binding duties, they may be more easily counterfeited; and I am not now pressing you to the discharge of your duty to others, but trying your sincerity before God. Have you therefore, mourned in secret for the sins of others? have they ever brought you to your knees? have they added fervor to your prayers? If it be so, I cannot think that you regard iniquity in your own hearts. This is no Pharisaical hypocrisy. It is known only to God. The profane cannot curse you for it, because they do not hear it: and if they were told it, it is probable they would not believe it.

But methinks I hear some serious person say, I have attended to the interrogatories; and though I would fain hope I know something of a sense of duty in all, yet, oh! how miserably defective have I been? Nothing like that deep sense of the presence of God, that humiliation of spirit for sin, that concern for the divine glory, that I ought to have had, that I have sometimes felt for a season, and that I wished to preserve.

Therefore, my brethren, I would once more ask you, can you now sincerely pray that God would search and try your ways, discover every secret sin, convince you of it, humble you for it, and deliver you from it? Is there no

reſerve, no exception whatever, nothing that you are willing to cover, that you are backward to examine, and diſpoſed to excuſe? Is there no doubtful practice, but what you are willing to think of deliberately, to examine impartially, and if it either appears to be ſinful, or but remaineth doubtful, to ſurrender freely? If you can ſay there is not, then after having pleaded your divorce from every ſin, I have only further to rob you of every duty too, and leave you nothing whereof to glory; to call you to renounce all ſelf-righteouſneſs and ſelf-dependence, and make you to ſay, "Not I, but the grace of God that was "with me: ſurely, in the Lord have I righteouſneſs and "ſtrength."

3. I ſhall only now ſhut up this diſcourſe with giving you a very few directions for your future preſervation.

I. Guard againſt the ſin or ſins that you may be moſt liable to, from your natural temper and conſtitution, which may be ſaid to be your own iniquity, and the ſin that moſt eaſily beſets you. It is lamentable to think what diſgraceful blemiſhes are ſometimes to be ſeen in the conduct of the ſervants of God. I know this is permitted in Providence, and cannot be wholly prevented. But no watchful Chriſtian will ſit ſtill eaſily under it. If ſuch a ſin gives him no reſt, he ſhould give it no quarter. Some very bad things are ſometimes borne with, under the notion of unavoidable infirmities. Yet they are to the prejudice of your own peace; they are a reproach to your profeſſion, and a diſhonour to your maſter. If you cannot wholly deſtroy, I beſeech you, wound and weaken them. If there is no probability that they will die wholly, but with the body, let it be ſeen that they are daily loſing ſtrength, and dying gradually.

2. Set a particular guard upon thoſe ſins that you may be oppoſed to, in your ordinary calling: in that way, where you go moſt frequently, the tempter knows he can moſt eaſily find you, and he will certainly be there to meet you. Beſides intereſt often pleads ſo ſtrongly in behalf of ſome ſins of this kind, and they are ſo much juſtified by example, that few can withſtand the temptation. But conſider, I beſeech you, that no honor, profit, or conve-

nience, can poſſibly counter-balance the loſs of God's favor! What a miſerable excellency is it indeed, to add a little to our earthly ſtore at the expence of his diſpleaſure, while we ourſelves are in his hand, and all that we have is in the moſt abſolute manner at his diſpoſal.

In the laſt place, if you deſire to be preſerved from the dominion of ſin, ſeat yourſelves often in the preſence of God. He ſeeth in ſecret, his eyes do ſee, his eye lids try the children of men. Aſk of him, therefore, that he may not ſuffer you to deceive yourſelves, but lead you in the paths of righteouſneſs for his name's ſake.

THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST.

SERMON 37.

Preached before the Society in Scotland for propagating Chriſtian Knowledge, in the High Church of Edinburgh, on Monday, January 2, 1758.

ACTS, iv. 12.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

IT it is not eaſy to conceive any ſubject, at once more important in itſelf, more ſeaſonable in this age, and more ſuited to the deſign of the preſent meeting, than the abſolute neceſſity of ſalvation through CHRIST. We live in an age in which (as is often complained) infidelity greatly prevails; but yet in which the cauſe of truth hath much leſs to fear from the aſſaults of its open enemies, than from the treachery of its pretended advocates. The lateſt infidel writers have carried their own ſcheme to ſuch perfection or extravagance, that it muſt diſcredit the cauſe in the eye of every ſober judge.* And indeed the

* See David Hume's writings on morals throughout; where, beſides leaving out entirely our duty to God, which he hath in common with many other late writers, he expreſsly founds juſtice upon power and conveniency, derides chaſtity, and turns many of the moſt important virtues into vices. See alſo Eſſays on the principles of morality and natural religion; the author of which, at one deciſive blow, takes away all ſin, by

goſpel can ſcarcely receive a greater injury, than when any profeſſing attachment to it, condeſcend to enter the liſts with ſuch abſurdities, or give ground of ſuſpicion that they ſtand in need of a ſerious refutation.

But there is another quarter from which we have much greater reaſon to apprehend danger, viz. that claſs of men, who, being nominal Chriſtians, diſguiſe or alter the goſpel, in order to defend it. Theſe often endeavor to give ſuch views of Chriſtianity, as will render it palatable to a corrupt worldly mind; and inſtead of abaſing, will ſooth and gratify the pride of man. Hence the unnatural mixture often to be ſeen of modern philoſophy with ancient Chriſtianity. Hence the fundamental doctrines of the goſpel are ſoftened, concealed, or denied; as, the loſt and guilty ſtate of man by nature, his liableneſs to everlaſting miſery, and the neceſſity of that ſatisfaction and ranſom which was paid by our Redeemer when he died upon the croſs. Inſtead of theſe, are we not many times preſented with a character of Chriſt as a teacher only, and not a Saviour; as one excellently qualified to reform the abuſes that had ſome how or other crept into the world, but the real ſource of which is hardly confeſſed, and never willingly brought into view? Is not our bleſſed Redeemer thereby put on a level, and expreſsly claſſed with mortal reformers? Perhaps indeed, a ſmall compliment of ſuperiority is paid him; which, however, there is reaſon to ſuſpect ariſes more from a prudent compliance with eſtabliſhed faith, than from any inward and cordial eſteem.

What could be reaſonably expected as the effect of ſuch conduct? No other than we find by experience hath actually taken place, that a cauſe ſo ill defended muſt daily loſe ground. The nearer Chriſtianity is brought to the principles of infidels to ſolicit their eſteem, the leſs occaſion will they ſee for it at all; and when it is perverted from

founding virtue on a deluſive feeling. Theſe writings are far from being hurtful in proportion to the intention of their authors: for though the principles contained in them are often retailed in converſation, yet it is only by way of amuſement, on account of their boldneſs or novelty, not one in an hundred appearing to have any ſerious conviction of their truth.

its original purpoſe, it can expect no countenance from its real author. The truth is, if there be no more in the goſpel than many by their language and writings would lead us to conceive, it is of ſmall conſequence whether it be embraced or not; and there can be little merit in a ſociety who have this as the deſign of their union, to ſpread and propagate Chriſtian knowledge. But very different are the ſentiments expreſſed by the apoſtle Peter in the text; where, ſpeaking of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth, he ſays, "Neither is there ſalvation in any other: for there is "none other name under heaven given among men "whereby we muſt be ſaved."

I am ſenſible, there are ſome of the very perſons hinted at above, who endeavor to explain away this text, and give it a very different meaning from that in which you will eaſily perceive I underſtand it. They make ſalvation to refer to the cure recorded in the preceding chapter, wrought upon the lame man! as if the apoſtle had ſaid, "Neither is there a power of healing in any other," &c. This is but one inſtance among many of the force and conſtraint they put upon Scripture, in order to accommodate it to their own ſentiments. I ſhall not waſte your time by a tedious refutation of this criticiſm, as the ſenſe I affix to the words will be ſufficiently ſupported by what ſhall follow on the ſubject. They appear to me plainly to affirm, that there is no other way by which ſinners of mankind can eſcape everlaſting miſery, but through Chriſt.

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, I propoſe, through divine aſſiſtance,

I. After a little illuſtrating the meaning of the aſſertion, to eſtabliſh and confirm its truth from the word of God.

II. To make a few reflections on this ſcheme, and ſhew, that it is not only moſt ſelf-conſiſtent, but moſt agreeable to the other parts of Scripture, as well as to the viſible ſtate of the world; and therefore that thoſe who, in reaſoning with infidels, depart from it in any meaſure, do thereby betray the cauſe which they profeſs to ſupport.

III. I ſhall make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I return to the firſt of theſe.

And as to the meaning of the aſſertion, the word ſaving or ſalvation evidently ſuppoſes a ſtate of miſery from which our deliverance muſt be wrought; and therefore no more than the full meaning of the paſſage is expreſſed in what follows, That all the poſterity of Adam are conceived in ſin, and brought forth in iniquity; alienated in heart from the love of God, and expoſed to the dreadful conſequences of his diſpleaſure. That they have not only acceſs to ſalvation through Chriſt, but that in this work he hath no rival; it is his, excluſive of all others: ſo that no man, whatever be his character, or whatever be his hope, ſhall enter into reſt, unleſs he be reconciled to God through Jeſus Chriſt.

Now, that all mankind are by nature in a ſtate of guilt and condemnation, is evident from the whole ſtrain of the holy Scriptures. This originally conſtituted the neceſſity of a Saviour, and alone illuſtrates the love and mercy of God in the appearance of his Son in our nature.—Unleſs this is ſuppoſed, the whole diſpenſations of the grace of God, both in the Old Teſtament and in the New, loſe their beauty, and loſe their meaning; nay, and would be juſtly eſteemed fooliſhneſs, as they are in fact by all who ſee not this foundation upon which they are built. As our firſt parents, and the earth for their ſakes, were laid under a curſe immediately after the original tranſgreſſion; ſo the effects of this apoſtacy on their poſterity are amply declared in Scripture. We have this repeated teſtimony from God himſelf concerning the old world, "And God "ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, "and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart "was only evil continually."* And again, "And the "Lord ſaid in his heart, I will not again curſe the ground "any more for man's ſake; for the imagination of man's "heart is evil from his youth."†

The rites and ceremonies of the Moſaic diſpenſation alſo, together with the whole hiſtory of Providence contained in the Old Teſtament, ſuppoſe the guilt and impurity of our nature. But the goſpel, as it is in all reſpects a

* Gen. vi. 5. † Gen. viii. 21.

clearer dispensation than the former, so it is most full and express upon this subject. Instead of enumerating many passages, we may consult the epistle of the apostle Paul to the Romans, where there is a distinct and labored illustration of the guilt and apostacy of all mankind; towards the conclusion of which he thus expresses himself: "For "we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they "are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righte- "ous, no not one: there is none that understandeth, there "is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of "the way, they are together become unprofitable; there "is none that doeth good, no not one."* And a little after, "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world "may become guilty before God."† To this I shall only add one passage from the same apostle: "Among whom "also we had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of "our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the "mind; and were by nature children of wrath, even as "others."‡

That the same Scriptures point out to us one only remedy for this our misery, is equally evident. Christ Jesus was promised to our first parents under the designation of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the serpent. He is afterwards promised to Abraham as his seed, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; to Jacob as Shiloh, to whom the gathering of the people should be. He is pointed out by Moses as the great prophet that should come into the world. And unless we suppose a typical reference to Christ in the legal washings, sacrifices, and other services, they will appear altogether unworthy of God, and altogether insufficient for the purposes for which they were used. This indeed is affirmed by the apostle to the Hebrews, "For it is not possible that "the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."‖ In the later prophets, there are many distinct and particular, many high and magnificent descriptions of the glory of Christ's person, and the greatness of his work. The

* Rom. iii. 9—12. † Rom. iii. 19. ‡ Eph. ii. 2.

‖ Heb. x. 4.

attention and expectation of every believer is directed to him; and he is ſtyled "the deſire of all nations."*

And in the New Teſtament, at his conception it is ſaid, "Thou ſhalt call his name Jeſus, for he ſhall ſave his "people from their ſins."† At his entrance on his public miniſtry, he is thus deſignated by John the Baptiſt, "Be- "hold the Lamb of God that taketh away the ſin of the "world."‡ The great deſign of his appearing in our nature, is declared in many paſſages of ſcripture. And as ſalvation is promiſed to thoſe who believe, ſo the condemnation of all unbelievers is neceſſarily implied as its counter-part, and often expreſsly affirmed. Thus the apoſtle John repreſents our Saviour himſelf as teaching, "God ſo "loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, "that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not PERISH, "but have everlaſting life."|| And when he gave commiſſion to his diſciples to preach the goſpel, it was in theſe terms: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel "to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, "ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damn- "ed."* The very meaning of the word Goſpel is glad tidings; importing not only the great, but the diſtinguiſhing happineſs of thoſe who hear the meſſage, and comply with the call. The apoſtles, who ſpread theſe glad tidings through the world, conſidered themſelves as bringing ſalvation to thoſe who before ſat in darkneſs, and in the region of the ſhadow of death. And by the following deſcription given by the apoſtle Paul of the ſtate of the Epheſians before converſion, may be ſeen what view he had of the condition of all who knew not God, as well as who believed not the goſpel, "That at that time ye were with- "out Chriſt, being aliens from the commonwealth of "Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the covenants of promiſe, "having no hope, and without God in the world."†— From the above ſummary, I hope it clearly appears, that, according to the Scriptures, there is no ſalvation in any other than in Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth.

* Hag. ii. 6. † Matt. i. 21. ‡ John i. 29. || John iii. 16.

* Mark xvi. 15, 16. † Eph. ii. 12.

It will, however, be proper, for the further illuſtration of this ſubject, to conſider a little to what this doctrine ſtands oppoſed. And though it is impoſſible diſtinctly to enumerate every thing that may in ſome ſhape or other be put in Chriſt's room, or attempt to rob him of his glory as a Saviour; yet, in general, they may all be reduced to the two following heads: 1ſt, Falſe religions, and uninſtituted rites; 2dly, Self-righteouſneſs, or the merit of our own defective obedience to the moral law. It is neceſſary to conſider each of theſe by itſelf, and to ſtate the bounds between them: for however little relation they may ſeem to have one to another, they are often mingled together in our apprehenſions, and mutually ſupport and ſtrengthen each other's cauſe.

In the firſt place, then, All worſhip of falſe gods, holding for truth what hath not the ſtamp of divine authority, and all uncommanded worſhip, be the object of it what it will, is wholly ineffectual to ſalvation: nay, ſo far is any thing of this kind from being ſufficient to ſupplant, or proper to co-operate with what Chriſt hath done, that it is deteſtable in the ſight of God. Perhaps it may be thought, that this is of ſmall moment, and wholly unworthy of notice; as in theſe days few or none will ſo much as pretend, except in jeſt, to lay any ſtreſs upon fabulous deities, or ſuperſtitious practices of human invention. But I did not chuſe to omit it, becauſe it appears to me a thing peculiarly inſiſted on in the holy Scriptures, which contain nothing unneceſſary. It is alſo very much the object of the reſentment of infidels.* At the ſame time, many pretended Chriſtians have, by deſign or inadvertence, ſpoken too much the language of infidels on this ſubject, or on ſubjects nearly related to it.

How much ſtreſs the Scriptures lay upon the knowledge of the true God, nay, how pernicious and deſtructive all falſe religions are, it were eaſy to ſhew at great

* It is very remarkable, that though infidels always ſet out on pretence of ſearching impartially after truth; yet they have unanimouſly agreed in putting truth and error entirely upon the ſame footing, both as to worth and influence.

length; but a few hints will suffice, as it is not a point controverted so much as neglected and forgotten. The very first commandment of the moral law is, "Thou shalt "have no other gods before me."*a* And the second, which forbids uninstituted worship, hath this strong sanction, for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the "third and fourth generation of them that hate me."*b*— Through the whole Old Testament, the idolatry and false worship of the Heathens is represented as highly criminal in them, and an abomination in the sight of God. It is there considered, not as a small part, but as the first and most provoking of their enormities; and in particular, is assigned as the ground of the utter extirpation of the nations of Canaan. In a perfect consistency with which, in the charge brought against them by the apostle Paul, this is the leading part or ground-work of the whole, "Because that when they knew God, they glorified him "not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain "in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was dar- "kened.*c*—And changed the glory of the incorruptible "God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and "to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."*d*

The great end also of the separation of the children of Israel, and their being kept from intercourse with other nations, was, that they might be preserved from idolatry. To the worship of the true God their blessings are promised, and against defection from his service to other gods the heaviest curses are denounced. Thus, after an enumeration of the blessings that should attend them if they kept God's commandments, it is said, "And thou shalt "not go aside from any of the words that I command thee "this day, to the right-hand or to the left, to go after "other gods to serve them."*e* And when they stood before the Lord, to enter into his covenant, it is said, "For "ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt, and "how we came through the nations which ye passed by.

a Exod xx. 3. *b* Exod. xx. 5. *c* Rom. i. 21.
d Ibid. ver. 23. *e* Deut. xxviii. 14.

" And ye have ſeen their abominations, and their idols, " wood and ſtone, ſilver and gold, which were among " them. Leſt there ſhould be among you, man, or wo- " man, or family, or tribe, whoſe heart turneth away this " day from the Lord our God, to go and ſerve the gods " of theſe nations; leſt there ſhould be among you a root " that beareth gall and wormwood."*a* The ſame thing may be ſeen running through the whole of the prophetic writings. Almoſt every judgment of God threatened or inflicted, is aſcribed to their idolatry as its cauſe. I only mention one paſſage, not for any thing particular in it, but as a ſufficient ſpecimen of the whole. It is a meſſage from God by Ezekiel to the children of Iſrael: " There- " fore ſay unto the houſe of Iſrael, Thus ſaith the Lord " God, Repent and turn yourſelves from your idols, and " turn away your faces from all your abominations. For " every one of the houſe of Iſrael, or of the ſtranger that " ſojourneth in Iſrael, which ſeparateth himſelf from me, " and ſetteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the " ſtumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and " cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; " I the Lord will anſwer him by myſelf, and I will ſet my " face againſt that man, and will make him a ſign and a " proverb, and I will cut him off from the midſt of my " people, and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord."*b*

In the very ſame manner, in the New Teſtament, embracing the goſpel of Chriſt, and continuing ſtedfaſt in the faith, is required as abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation; " He that believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life; and " he that believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life, but the " wrath of God abideth on him."*c* The importance of holding the truth without mixture, is plainly declared in the following paſſage: " Brethren, if any of you do err " from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, " that he which converteth the ſinner from the error of his " way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death, and ſhall hide a mul- " titude of ſins."*d*

a Deut. xxix. 16, 17, 18. *b* Ezek. xiv. 6, 7, 8.

c John iii. 36. *d* James v. 19, 20.

It had been eaſy to have given a much larger proof of this from Scripture; but it is unneceſſary; for our enemies themſelves confeſs it, nay object it as a ground of reproach. How many invectives have we from infidel writers againſt the unpeaceable, unſocial ſpirit of the Jewiſh firſt, and afterwards of the Chriſtian religion? And how often are theſe contraſted with the mild and aſſociating temper of the Heathen worſhippers? Among them it implied no abſurdity, that different nations ſhould have different gods, and different forms of worſhip; nay, they often intermixed, compounded, and mutually adopted each others worſhip. The Athenians, that wiſe people, were ſo prone to receive every foreign rite, that they got this character from an ancient writer (whether by way of encomium indeed, or ſatire, is at this diſtance uncertain) that they were hoſpitable to the gods. According to the ſentiments of modern unbelievers, they would deſerve much praiſe for this; but according to the ſentiments of an inſpired apoſtle, "profeſſing themſelves wiſe, they be-"came fools."

In this then it is acknowledged, that the goſpel of our ſalvation eſſentially differs from every human invention; that it conſtantly repreſents itſelf as THE TRUTH, and all things oppoſite to it, as falſe, diſhonorable to God, and unprofitable to men. This has been the caſe in every ſtep of its progreſs, from its firſt riſe in the comparative obſcurity of the original promiſe, through all the preparatory diſcoveries of ſucceeding ages, to its complete manifeſtation in the fulneſs of time. And though it has been expoſed on this account to the virulent reproaches of men of corrupt minds, it is but ſo much the more credible, and appears to be from the one only, the living, unchangeable, and true God.*a*

It may be proper here to obſerve, that it is either the ſame objection aſſuming a different form, or one very much like it, when it is alledged againſt the goſpel, That it lays too much ſtreſs upon mere belief of the truth. To this ſome have, perhaps by miſtaking the true ſpring of

a See this ſubject handled with great clearneſs and preciſion by Dr. Warburton in his Divine Legation of Moſes.

the objection, given a very wrong and dangerous anſwer. They deny the fact, that the goſpel does lay too much, or any ſtreſs at all upon bare belief, ſeparate from goodneſs of life. The danger of this anſwer does not lie in its being falſe, but in its being ambiguous, incomplete, and in a great meaſure improper. It ſeems to allow, at leaſt not to deny, that there may be ſincere belief, while yet it is not attended with its proper fruits. Thus unbelievers, whoſe real quarrel is with the alledged importance and efficacy of the truth, are hardened in their indifference and diſregard to it; whereas they ought to be taught to conſider the principles which are productive of real reformation, as more excellent in themſelves, as both neceſſary and effectual for this purpoſe.

The goſpel does indeed lay great ſtreſs upon belief of the truth, not without, but as the only way of producing holineſs. Many paſſages may be cited from the Old Teſtament, in which going after falſe gods, and comitting other groſs crimes, are repreſented as inſeparable branches of the ſame character; and worſhipping and ſerving the true God, as a ſummary deſcription of univerſal obedience.*a* And many paſſages may be produced from the New Teſtament, in which the good effects of the truth, and the miſery of departing from it, as neceſſarily implying an unſanctified ſtate, are declared.*b* From all this I conclude, that Chriſt Jeſus, the promiſe of old made unto the fathers, the hope of Iſrael, the light of the world, and the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth, is the only Saviour of ſinners, in oppoſition to all falſe religions, and every uninſtituted rite; as he himſelf ſays, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no "man cometh unto the Father but by me."*c*

But, 2dly, Chriſt is the only Saviour, in oppoſition to the merit of our own obedience to the moral law. I know, ſome will be ready to ſuppoſe, that though falſe religion and uninſtituted rites may have no poſitive influence in procuring ſalvation to thoſe who embrace them, yet they

a See Deut. xxix. 18, 19. Numb. xxv. 1, 2. *b* See John viii. 31, 32. Id. xvii. 17. 2 John ver 4. Col. i. 5. 6. *c* John xiv. 6.

may not hinder their acceptance with God by virtue of their own perſonal merit and obedience. On this ſubject there are many things which deſerve a more particular and diſtinct conſideration than there is room for at preſent; ſuch as, 1. That all falſe religion is not merely unprofitable, but highly criminal in the ſight of God. Thus the apoſtle Paul, " But I ſay, that the things which the Gen- " tiles ſacrifice, they ſacrifice to devils, and not to God: " and I would not that ye ſhould have fellowſhip with " devils."*a* 2. That all who embrace not the truth as it is in Jeſus, muſt neglect the whole duties of the firſt table of the moral law, and ſo their obedience be not only greatly, but eſſentially defective. 3. That the Scriptures give us no ground to believe, that falſe principles can produce any virtue but what is ſpurious. But inſtead of inſiſting upon theſe at preſent, I ſhall only attempt to ſhew, that the Scriptures exclude all human merit, and indeed ſeem to have it as their expreſs purpoſe, to ſtain the pride of all human glory; and therefore that no pretence of this kind can poſſibly be admitted.

And here I ſhall wholly paſs the ſacrifices of atonement under the Moſaic diſpenſation, becauſe they all pointed at the ſacrifice offered by Chriſt upon the croſs; and therefore, in the account given of the end and deſtination of this laſt, we may expect the cleareſt view of the grounds of our acceptance with God. Now, Chriſt appears in Scripture, " as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the " ſin of the world:" as " giving his life" for his people; as " bearing their ſins in his own body on the tree." And indeed every expreſſion is uſed that could well be imagined to ſignify a propitiatory ſacrifice, an atonement for ſin, or the puniſhment of an innocent perſon in the room and ſtead of the guilty. If this was neceſſary for any, it was neceſſary for all; and as there is not the leaſt intimation given in Scripture of any diſtinction, or hint, as if there were any perſons with regard to whom it was ſuperfluous. Nothing, therefore, can ſtand more directly oppoſed to the deſign of the goſpel, than any plea of merit in man:

a 1 Cor. x. 20.

and none do in fact receive it with more disdain, than those who trust in themselves that they are righteous.

But, for our satisfaction on this point, we need only consult the epistle to the Romans, before referred to, as there is no part of the sacred writing where there is a more full and connected account of the foundation of the gospel. There, after proving that all the world are become guilty before God, the apostle says, "Therefore by the deeds of "the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for "by the law is the knowledge of sin.*a* Being justified "freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in "Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitia-"tion, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteous-"ness for the remission of sins that are past, through the "forbearance of God."*b* And again, "Therefore as by "the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to con-"demnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free "gift came upon all men to justification of life."*c* Consonant to this is the doctrine of the same apostle elsewhere: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; "for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do "count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be "found in him, not having mine own righteousness, "which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of "Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."*d*

I am not insensible, that great pains have been taken, even by some Christians, to evade the force of these passages of Scripture, which exclude the merit of man's obedience from any share in his justification before God. Particularly, the passages from the epistle to the Romans are evaded, by alledging, that the law, and the works of the law, there, mean only the rites of the Mosaic dispensation. This is not a proper time and place for entering fully into that controversy; and therefore I shall only observe, that, besides the correspondence of the above interpretation with all the other parts of Scripture, it may be sufficiently sup-

a Rom. iii. 20. *b* Ib. ver. 24, 25. *c* Chap. v. 18. *d* Phil. iii. 8, 9. See also Rom. iv. 23—25. Tit. iii. 5.

ported by this one conſideration, That the apoſtle, who is ſpeaking both of Jews and Gentiles, expreſsly ſtates the oppoſition with reſpect to our juſtification between grace and debt, and excludes every thing that might make it of debt: "Where is boaſting then? It is excluded. By "what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. "Therefore we conclude, that a man is juſtified by faith, "without the deeds of the law."*a* And to the ſame purpoſe, a little after, "Now to him that worketh is the re- "ward not of grace, but of debt. But to him that work- "eth not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, "his faith is counted for righteouſneſs."*b* Whatever would make our acceptance with God not free, or not of grace, is here excluded. Now, certainly, as there is a much more plauſible plea of merit in favor of works of obedience to the moral, than the ceremonial law; the firſt are at leaſt as much excluded as the laſt by the apoſtle's reaſoning.*c*

a Rom. iii. 27, 28. *b* Rom. iv. 4, 5.

c It is eaſy to foreſee, that a grand objection againſt what is ſaid on this head will be, That it is going upon a very narrow ſcheme, and a ſcheme very uncharitable to many parties of Chriſtians. It is the faſhionable language of the age, to give large encomiums upon charity, when the deſign is to level truth and falſhood; and to alledge, either that there is little difference between them, as to their effects, or that they cannot be diſtinguiſhed from one another by their proper marks. This is a ſubject that needs as much to be ſet in a proper light, as any I know. If the ſenſe in which charity in ſentiment is commonly underſtood, viz. a favorable judgment of the opinions of others, be the Scripture meaning of it, then certainly ſome bounds muſt be ſet to it; and it muſt be praiſe or blame worthy, according to the caſes in which it is exerciſed. I muſt needs take it for granted, that there are ſome fundamental errors, and that it is poſſible to make ſhipwreck of the faith. Now, however common or faſhionable it may be, to think, the farther charity is extended the better: it may be demonſtrated, that a favorable judgment of errors fundamental, or deſtructive of religion, doth neceſſarily imply either a light eſteem or weak perſuaſion of the truth, or both. This ſurely is no part of a truly Chriſtian character; and if it be rightly denominated charity, it is become vicious by exceſs. I confeſs it appears to me, that juſtification by free grace is a fundamental doctrine

Thus I have endeavored both to explain and confirm the aſſertion in the text, That there is no ſalvation in any other but in Chriſt. There is, however, one queſtion upon it which I would willingly paſs over in ſilence, but that the omiſſion of it might, to ſome intelligent hearers, weaken the concluſion, and make them reckon the ſubject incompletely handled. The queſtion is, Whether an objective revelation and explicit diſcovery of Chriſt, and what he hath wrought, is neceſſary to ſalvation? or if his undertaking may not be the ground of acceptance for many who never heard of his name? In ſupport of the laſt of theſe it is ſaid, That many of the ancient patriarchs and prophets were far from having diſtinct views of the

of the goſpel. If this be true, I am not wrong in having the deepeſt ſenſe of the danger of contrary opinions: nay, if I am miſtaken, the conſequences I draw from it, are no breaches of charity, but the neceſſary effects of an error in judgment; and ſo I claim charity in my turn from my adverſaries upon their own principles.

But I am perſuaded the above is not the meaning of the word Charity in Scripture, but that it means an ardent and unfeigned love to others, and a deſire of their welfare, temporal and eternal; and may very well conſiſt with the ſtrongeſt abhorrence of their wicked principles. We do find indeed in Scripture many charges, not to judge one another, mutually to forbear one another in things indifferent, and not to ſuppoſe that men's outward actions proceed from a bad principle which they do not profeſs. But this is never called charity; and it is, by the reaſoning on it, expreſsly limited to things really indifferent in their nature. (See the xivth and xvth chapters of the epiſtle to the Romans.) Perhaps it will be ſaid, ſome may judge things to be neceſſary, which in truth are but indifferent. This cannot be denied; but there is no help for it. It is a conſequence of the imperfection of human nature. Yet ſtill every man muſt judge for himſelf, and muſt diſtinguiſh between things indifferent and neceſſary, in the beſt manner he can. It is very remarkable, that the apoſtle John, who ſpeaks moſt of the importance of charity and mutual love, hath alſo perhaps the ſtrongeſt expreſſions of any of the apoſtles, on the hatefulneſs and danger of error. Thus he ſays in his ſecond epiſtle, ver. 10, 11. "If there come any unto you, and bring "not this doctrine, receive him not into your houſe, neither "bid him God ſpeed. For he that biddeth him God ſpeed, is "partaker of his evil deeds."

perſon, character, and work of Chriſt; and if (as all ſuppoſe) his undertaking was available for their acceptance, why not of others alſo? On ſuch a queſtion, no doubt, modeſty and caution is highly commendable, and perhaps it were wiſe in ſome reſpects to ſuſpend the determination altogether. But there are caſes in which it comes neceſſarily to be conſidered: for inſtance, I do not ſee how it can be avoided, in ſpeaking of the importance or neceſſity of propagating the goſpel among the nations that know not God.

We may therefore obſerve, that the only juſt foundation of our hope in God, either for ourſelves or others, eſpecially as ſinners, is his promiſe. The firſt of theſe ought to be preciſely commenſurate to the laſt. In ſo far as it is defective, or falls ſhort of this meaſure, we are chargeable with unbelief; and in ſo far as it exceeds, with preſumption. Now, to whomſoever the true God is revealed in any meaſure, as merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin; however obſcurely he points out the meritorious cauſe of pardon, if they believe his word and accept of his mercy, they ſhall be ſaved; as we are told, "Abraham believed God, and it was "counted to him for righteouſneſs."*a* As to any others, if they are in abſolute ignorance of the true God, we muſt ſay, that there doth not appear, from Scripture, any ground on which to affirm, that the efficacy of Chriſt's death extends to them: on the contrary, we are expreſsly told, that they have "no hope."*b* We find indeed in ſcripture, that the diſplay of divine perfection in the works of creation, and the conduct of Providence, is repreſented as rendering the heathens inexcuſable in their contempt and neglect of God: "Nevertheleſs he left not himſelf with-"out witneſs, in that he did good, and gave us rain from "heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons, filling our hearts with food "and gladneſs.*c* Becauſe that which may be known of "God is manifeſt in them; for God hath ſhewed it unto "them. For the inviſible things of him from the creation

a Rom. iv. 3. *b* See the forecited paſſage, Eph. ii. 12.

c Acts xiv. 17.

" of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the " things that are made, even his eternal power and god- " head: ſo that they are without excuſe."*a* Should any deſire from theſe paſſages to infer, that if any of them made a juſt and dutiful uſe of theſe natural notices of God, he would not fruſtrate their ſearch, but would lead them to the ſaving knowledge of himſelf, I have nothing to object againſt the general poſition; but I am afraid it will be difficult to make any other legitimate uſe of this conceſſion than the apoſtle has made already, that they are " without excuſe" in their eſtrangement from God. One thing more we are authoriſed from Scripture to ſay, that their guilt is in proportion to their means of knowledge; that they continue in their natural ſtate, and are not chargeable with the ſin of rejecting the goſpel which they never heard: " For as many as have ſinned without law, " ſhall alſo periſh without law; and as many as have ſin- " ned in the law, ſhall be judged by the law."*b*

I proceed now to the ſecond thing propoſed, which was, To make a few reflections on this ſcheme; and ſhew, that it is not only moſt ſelf-conſiſtent, but moſt agreeable to the other parts of ſcripture, as well as to the viſible ſtate of the world; and therefore that thoſe who, in reaſoning with infidels, depart from it in any meaſure, do thereby betray the cauſe which they profeſs to ſupport.

We have many proofs of the ingenuity and art of perſons under the power of prejudice, in evading the force, or wreſting the meaning of particular texts of ſcripture; and therefore it muſt ſerve much for the confirmation of any doctrine, that it is not only ſupported by expreſs paſſages, but agreeable to the ſtrain and ſpirit of the whole. That this is the caſe with the doctrine in queſtion, I might ſhew at great length: at preſent I content myſelf with the few following reflections. 1ſt, There is nothing more frequently or more undeniably found in ſcripture, than a celebration of the rich mercy and free grace of God in Chriſt Jeſus, in ſuch language as will ſcarce accord with any other plan than that which I have above endeavored to explain and ſupport. It has been a remark frequently

a Rom. i. 19, 20. *b* Rom. ii. 12.

made, of the juſtice of which every ſerious peruſer of the ſacred writings will be ſenſible, that the inſpired penmen ſeem, as it were, to be raiſed and elevated above their ordinary pitch when they are on this theme, and that both in the Old and New Teſtament. Wherever there is a ſtriking paſſage in the poetic, or prophetic writings, containing ſentiments of the moſt rapturous joy, or moſt ardent gratitude, there we may be ſure is a prophecy of Chriſt. See the Pſalmiſt David often thus diſtinguiſhing himſelf, particularly in the following paſſage: "His name "ſhall endure forever: his name ſhall be continued as "long as the ſun: and men ſhall be bleſſed in him; and "all nations ſhall call him bleſſed. Bleſſed be the Lord "God, the God of Iſrael, who only doth wondrous things. "And bleſſed be his glorious name forever; and let the "whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and A-"men."*a*

The apoſtle Paul alſo, not only when expreſsly handling the ſubject, but even when he accidentally meets with it in the illuſtration of another argument, ſeems to ſire at the thought, and either expatiates upon it with a profuſion of eloquence and energy of expreſſion; or collects as it were, his whole force, and ſurpriſes us more, by diſpatching it at one ſingle maſterly ſtroke.*b*

Now, I would aſk, Why ſo many encomiums on the mercy and grace of God in pardoning ſinners through Chriſt, if his undertaking had not been abſolutely neceſſary for their recovery? Whence could ariſe ſo deep an obligation to gratitude, if our ſtate had not been abſolutely deplorable, or if relief could have been obtained from any other quarter? There muſt ſurely be a great impropriety in the Scripture-language on this ſubject, when uſed by ſome perſons agreeably to their other ſentiments. And indeed their being very ſparing of this language, avoiding it as much as poſſible, and dwelling with moſt pleaſure on different themes, is a tacit confeſſion and acknowledgment of this truth.

a Pſal. lxxii. 17, 18, 19. *b* See an inſtance of the firſt of theſe, Eph. iii. 17. and of the laſt, 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

But, beſides the mercy of God to the world in general in ſending his Son to redeem us who were ſold under ſin, we find in ſcripture many ſtrong declarations of the infinite mercy of God in ſending the tidings of ſalvation to thoſe who were ignorant of them before. This appears from ſeveral of the paſſages formerly cited, and many more that might be added. I only mention one of the apoſtle Paul, recorded in the Acts of the Apoſtles: "Be "it known therefore unto you, that the ſalvation of God "is ſent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."*a* Now, what is meant by this? Were theſe Gentiles in a way of ſalvation before? and what benefit did they reap from this intelligence? If it be ſaid, that they were comparatively in a more advantageous ſituation than before; this when ſtrictly examined, will be found to draw after it all the conſequences ſo diſagreeable to the pride of man, for which the other ſuppoſition is rejected. Or rather, when their comparative advantages are carried ſo far as to give any thing like a conſiſtent meaning to the above and other paſſages of Scripture, it will amount entirely to the ſame thing. For I hope no Chriſtian will aſſert, that any perſon in the world, who hath the exerciſe of reaſon, is under a Natural, but only a Moral impoſſibility,*b* of coming to the knowledge, and doing the will of God. If the firſt were the caſe, it would take away all ſin; but the laſt is only ſuch an obſtinate diſinclination, as is ſtill conſiſtent with guilt and blame.

a Acts xxviii. 28.

b I uſe the words Natural and Moral impoſſibility in the ſenſe in which they are uſed by the authors who firſt applied that diſtinction to ſubjects of philoſophy and divinity, and not in the abſurd ſenſe in which ſome late infidel writers do obſtinately perſiſt in uſing them. Theſe gentlemen, inſtead of meaning by Natural or Phyſical neceſſity or impoſſibility, that which ariſes from the irreſiſtible operation of the laws of nature, and by Moral, a high degree of probability from concurring circumſtances, tell us, that Phyſical neceſſity is what ariſes from the laws of matter; and Moral, that which ariſes from the laws of mind or ſpirit. But nothing can be more evident, than that any influence from without upon mind or ſpirit, if it be irreſiſtible, is as much phyſical or natural neceſſity as any other. And the diſtinction thus explained, or perverted, is utterly uſeleſs, when applied to morals.

Another reflection we may make on this subject, That according to the constant tenor of the holy Scripture, not only an offer of mercy for Christ's sake must be made to the sinner, but a change must be wrought on his heart and temper so great, as to be termed a New Creation, and a Second Birth. The first of these is an act of the divine government, the last is a work of divine power. Now, I would beg leave to ask, How and where is this to be expected? It cannot surely proceed from the influence of fabulous deities, or be the effect of idolatrous rites. It is not the work of man, and therefore only of the Spirit of Christ. Should any think fit to presume, that the sanctifying influences of the holy Ghost are bestowed universally, though unknown to the receivers; this again annihilates all the superior advantages of Christians; and, on the very best possible supposition, is an assertion thrown out at random, and altogether destitute of support from the oracles of truth.

A third observation I would make, That this scheme alone makes the foundation of the gospel sufficient to bear the superstructure. Nothing else can sufficiently account for the cost and expence, if I may speak so, that have been laid out in the redemption of man. It is very evident, that both the prophets in the Old Testament, and the apostles in the New, are at great pains to give us a view of the glory and dignity of the PERSON of CHRIST. With what magnificent titles is he adorned? What glorious attributes are ascribed to him? And what mighty works are said to be done by him? All these conspire to teach us, that he is truly and properly God, God over all, blessed for ever. On the other hand, How much is his humiliation and abasement insisted on; the reproach and contempt of his life, the pain and ignominy of his death? And the infinite value of his sufferings, arising from these two united considerations? Nothing can more plainly shew the guilt and misery of man, than that so great a person should be employed in rescuing him, so infinite a price paid for his ransom. If such a propitiation was necessary for the heirs of glory, how hopeless must be the state of

thoſe who have no claim to, or intereſt in, or dependence upon it ?*a*

The laſt obſervation I am to make at preſent, is, That the ſcheme above laid down, is alſo moſt agreeable to the viſible ſtate of the world, and furniſhes the plain and the only ſufficient anſwer to the old objection againſt the Chriſtian revelation, the want of univerſality. This aſſertion to ſome will appear ſurpriſing, as it ſeems to have been on purpoſe to avoid or anſwer this objection, that all the other opinions have been formed. However, they ſtill leave the objection in all its force; nay, it is often ſupported and ſtrengthened by the reaſonings upon them. But, on the principles above laid down, it is capable of the following plain and eaſy ſolution. It is of the infinite mercy and free grace of God, that he did not leave all mankind to periſh in a ſtate of ſin and miſery. Where then lies the difficulty in believing, that ſome only, and not all, are ſaved, or are furniſhed with the means of ſalvation ? If all are juſtly liable to wrath, upon which the whole goſpel is built, mercy to a part can never be improbable, or unworthy of God, on account of the ruin in the reſt: ſo that the objection can only take its riſe from doubt or diſbelief of that firſt and fundamental truth.

If a prince had a number of traitors in his power, whoſe treaſon was of the moſt aggravated and inexcuſable kind, and we ſhould be informed that he had granted a free pardon to ſome, and left the reſt to ſuffer the juſt puniſhment of their crime; would it be the leaſt objection againſt his clemency, that it extended only to a ſelect number of the offenders ? or would it be any juſt impeachment of his management, or render the intelligence incredible, ſuppoſing the prince to be wiſe, as well as gracious ? The caſe is preciſely the ſame with God. If it be but granted, that it is Mercy extended to thoſe who eſcape, this abſo-

a It is a ſtrong confirmation of this, that it holds almoſt without exception, in comparing the ſentiments and ſchemes of the different parties of Chriſtians, that thoſe who have the ſlighteſt ſenſe of the neceſſity of atonement, and the greateſt bias to a ſelf-righteous plan, are always moſt diſpoſed to leſſen the glory of our Redeemer's perſon ; lean moſt to, or judge moſt favorably of the Socinian or Arian hypotheſis.

lutely deſtroys the force of any objection that can be drawn from the number or circumſtances of thoſe that periſh.

There is in this reſpect a beautiful and inſtructive analogy between the courſe of divine Providence, and the methods of divine grace; and much in both muſt be reſolved into the wiſdom and ſovereignty of God. There is an immenſe variety in the diſtribution both of natural advantages and ſpiritual bleſſings; and it is vain for us to expect that we ſhould be able to aſſign the whole, or indeed almoſt any, of the grounds either of the one or the other. But if neither ſort is merited, if both are the effects of free undeſerved bounty, this cuts off all cauſe of complaint; and as to the difference which we obſerve in fact, particularly with regard to the laſt, we muſt be content to ſay, with the apoſtle Paul, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!"*a*

From theſe obſervations it will plainly appear, that departing from the principles above laid down, is a very great injury to the cauſe of truth, and ſtrengthens that of infidelity. If they are founded upon the word of God, as I hope has been ſufficiently proved, then no good can poſſibly flow from ſoftening or diſguiſing them, in order to leſſen their oppoſition to the pride and prejudices of corrupt minds. Has ſuch conduct in fact leſſened the number of infidels, or reconciled them to the doctrine of Chriſt? On the contrary, have they not become more numerous, and more bold in their oppoſition to the goſpel, in proportion to the attempts that have been and are made to ſuit it to their taſte? Nay, have they not made uſe of innumerable paſſages from Chriſtian writers in ſupport of their own cauſe? For in all ſuch caſes, as Chriſtians ſpeak merely the language of natural religion, or magnify the preſent powers of the human mind, in order to rear up a ſelf-righteous ſcheme, they are conſidered by infidels, and juſtly, not as defending the goſpel with ſucceſs, but as

a Rom. xi. 32, 33.

yielding up the great point in debate, and coming over to their own party.

I proceed now to make ſome practical improvement of this ſubject. And, in the

1ſt place, From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the real, the unſpeakable moment of propagating Chriſtian knowledge. It is indeed, ſo far as it is cordially embraced, turning men "from darkneſs to light, and from the pow-"er of Satan unto God." Theſe words have a deep and intereſting meaning, if underſtood as above, but not otherwiſe. Let us only ſuppoſe thoſe who deny or call in queſtion the abſolute neceſſity of ſalvation through Chriſt, employed as miſſionaries in converting the Heathens: how cold, how ambiguous and inconcluſive the arguments with which they would endeavor to preſs the change! But the view of it given above, muſt in the ſtrongeſt manner diſpoſe every ſerious perſon to ſupport ſuch a deſign, and powerfully animate to diligence thoſe who are employed in carrying it into execution.

It is allowed by all, that doing good, and communicating happineſs, is the moſt excellent character; that promoting the intereſt of our brethren of mankind, is a natural fruit and expreſſion of our love to God, and an imitation of the divine benignity. But what compariſon is there between any acts of beneficence that regard only the preſent life and the welfare of the body, and thoſe that affect the everlaſting intereſt of an immortal ſpirit? As far as God's redeeming grace is ſuperior to his providential care, ſo far muſt our ſincere and ſucceſsful endeavors to promote the ſalvation of the ſoul, excel any relief or help we can give to the wants of the body.

The laſt of theſe purpoſes, however, is often celebrated by infidels, in oppoſition to the other, which they delight in treating with deriſion and ſcorn. But as nothing can be more evident than its comparative excellence, ſuppoſing its reality; ſo there is not the leaſt contrariety between the two deſigns: ſo far from it, that they are ſtrongly connected together, and are always beſt promoted in conjunction. There may be indeed ſingle inſtances of perſons, from oſtentation or other falſe motives, parting

with their goods to feed the poor, who have no true love to God or their brethren. But in general, it is certain, that thoſe who have "their treaſure in heaven; who love "not the world, nor the things of the world;" (which, however hard a ſaying it may appear, is the real character of every Chriſtian) will more eaſily communicate of what they poſſeſs to thoſe who ſtand in need. True religion always enlarges the heart, and ſtrengthens the ſocial tie. Every believer muſt view his poor brethren in ſeveral endearing lights, as children of the ſame heavenly Father, as under the ſame original guilt, dependent on the ſame Saviour, and preparing for the ſame judgment; whereas wicked men, however various their characters, do habitually, by luxury and ſelf-indulgence of ſome kind or other, feed their pride, increaſe their wants, and inflame their appetites. This not only gives them a narrow turn of mind, but often waſtes their ſubſtance; and ſo neceſſarily obſtructs their liberality, by taking away both the inclination and ability to beſtow.

And as thoſe who have a juſt concern for the everlaſting intereſt of others, will be moſt diſpoſed to relieve their preſent diſtreſſes; ſo the bounty of ſuch will always be beſt directed, and followed with the happieſt effects. They never ſeparate the two great ends, of making men happy in this world, and heirs of eternal life; and will therefore have it as their chief care, to promote induſtry and ſobriety in all whom they take upon them to ſupply. It is too often ſeen, that what is dignified with the fineſt names, and repreſented as the effect of generoſity, humanity, and compaſſion, is wholly without merit in the giver, pernicious and hurtful to the receiver. How many diſſolute livers are not covetous, only becauſe they are under the dominion of a contrary paſſion? In the mean time, what they beſtow, is either entirely thrown away by an indiſcriminate profuſion; or, as is more commonly the caſe, it is worſe than thrown away, being confined to the moſt worthleſs of all wretches, who are their aſſiſtants or companions in their crimes. In oppoſition to this, a real Chriſtian, ſupremely governed by the love of God, will direct every action to his glory; and while compaſſion,

ſtrengthened by a ſenſe of duty, excites him to deal his bread to the hungry, he will have a ſtill ſuperior ſolicitude to preſerve them from ſin. Inſtead of an injudicious ſupply of fuel to their luſt, which is eaſy to a ſlothful, and gratifying to a carnal mind, he will endeavor to fit them for heaven, by ſuitable inſtruction; and reſcue them from want and idleneſs in this world, by lawful induſtry.

Theſe two great purpoſes have been jointly promoted by the ſociety in Scotland for propagating Chriſtian knowledge. They have been promoted with a moſt laudable zeal and diligence, and with a ſucceſs fully equal to the means the ſociety are poſſeſſed or furniſhed with for carrying them on. The promoting of true religion, loyalty, and induſtry, in the highlands of Scotland, was the firſt object of their care: and the importance of encouraging it has been repreſented in the ſtrongeſt light on many former occaſions of this ſort, and is well known. But there is another part of their deſign, to ſpread the knowledge of Chriſt, the only Saviour of ſinners, among the unenlightened Heathen nations. On this, the ſubject of my diſcourſe leads me to ſpeak a little more particularly.

Of the importance of ſuch a deſign every one who believes the goſpel muſt be ſenſible. But, except the very reſtricted efforts of the ſociety, little or nothing has ever been attempted by the Britiſh nation. And is not God, in his righteous Providence towards us at preſent, manifeſtly and ſeverely puniſhing us for this neglect? Are we not engaged in war with a potent and formidable neighbor, in which the ſupreme Diſpoſer of all events hath viſibly written diſappointment on every one of our attempts? Did not this war take its riſe from the diſputed limits of our territories in America? And are not our colonies in that part of the world expoſed to the moſt cruel and mercileſs depredations? Are not families, which ought to be quiet and peaceable habitations, frequently alarmed in the ſilence of the night with the cry of war; and the tendereſt relations often butchered in each other's preſence, and that by a people of a ſtrange language, while the weak mother and helpleſs infant can only lift a ſupplicating eye, but cannot aſk for mercy? Who then are the inſtruments

of this cruelty? Muſt we not anſwer, Thoſe very Indians, a great part of whoſe territory we poſſeſs, and whom, with a contempt equally impolitic and unchriſtian, we ſuffer to continue in ignorance of the only living and true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent?

Such a particular interpretation of the language of Providence may be thought bold; but there are many circumſtances which, in a manner, conſtrain us to confeſs its propriety. We have been a nation early and long favored with the light of divine truth, and are therefore bound to communicate it to others. That diſtant country was a refuge to many of our pious forefathers, when flying from the rage of eccleſiaſtic tyranny; and the territory either taken from, or ceded to us by theſe people, has been the great ſource of wealth and power to this nation. But what ſeems chiefly to warrant this application is, that the care taken by our enemies to convert the Indians, is the chief, if not the ſingle cauſe of their ſuperior intereſt among that people. Their free, independent manner of living, makes the Britiſh temper, character, and cuſtoms, in all other reſpects more agreeable to them. But being once converted, not to the Chriſtian faith, but to the Romiſh ſuperſtition, they are inviolably attached to the French intereſt. And that politic, but fraudulent nation, are able to cover and excuſe their own treacherous deſigns, by the ungovernable and ſavage barbarity of their Indian allies.

Can there be therefore a more noble, a more important, or more neceſſary exerciſe of Chriſtian charity, than enabling the ſociety to carry on their uſeful and ſalutary ſchemes, eſpecially to extend their miſſions to the Indian tribes? Who that knows the value of immortal ſouls, can refuſe to contribute his ſhare in promoting this excellent deſign? Who that fears the juſt judgment and diſpleaſure of God, can refuſe to take this ſtep, amongſt others, evidently neceſſary for averting his threatened vengeance? And who that loves his Redeemer's name, but muſt deſire that it ſhould be adored from the riſing to the ſetting ſun? The boldneſs and activity of ſinners in ſpreading every ſpecies of corruption, ſhould excite an emulation in be-

lievers not to be behind hand in the ſervice of a much better maſter. Have we not ſeen much profane zeal diſcovered in ſupport of the moſt pernicious and criminal amuſements, which conſume time, enervate the body, and pollute the mind? And ſhall there not be a like concern to promote knowledge and holineſs in the uncivilized parts of our own country, and to carry the glad tidings of the goſpel of peace to thoſe who now ſit in darkneſs, and in the region and ſhadow of death? Are there not many to whom the name of a Saviour is precious, "even as "ointment poured forth;" who burn with deſire, that the riches of divine grace, which can never be exhauſted, may be more largely diffuſed? And will not all ſuch chearfully and liberally contribute to extend the bounds of their Redeemer's kingdom, in the proſpect of that bleſſed time, when the knowledge of God ſhall cover the earth as the waters cover the ſea? Or of that ſtill more glorious period, when every veſſel of mercy, from the eaſt, weſt, north and ſouth, ſhall be gathered together, and ſit down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father?

I ſhall now conclude my diſcourſe, by preaching this Saviour to all who hear me, and intreating you, in the moſt earneſt manner, to believe in Jeſus Chriſt; "for there "is no ſalvation in any other." This is far from being unneceſſary or improper, even in an audience of profeſſing Chriſtians. Wherever there is a national profeſſion of the goſpel, there are always many who, though they retain the name of Chriſtians, are ſtrangers to real faith in Chriſt, or union with God through him; nay, who in their hearts are enemies to the truth in its ſimplicity and purity. It is in vain to attempt, by reaſoning, to bring men to an acknowledgment of the truth of the Chriſtian doctrine in ſpeculation, unleſs we alſo bring them to ſuch a perſonal conviction of their guilt and wretchedneſs, as will make them receive the information of Chriſt's character and work, as glad tidings to their own ſouls. No other converts receive any benefit themſelves by the change; nor are they of any ſervice to Chriſt and his cauſe, except ſo

far as they are over-ruled by the fovereign providence of that God who only can "bring good out of evil."

Wherefore, my beloved hearers, be perfuaded, from the word of God, which you profefs to believe, from the ftate of the world, which you may fee, and of your own hearts, which you may feel, that you are by nature wretched, and miferable, and poor, and blind, and naked. You are fo far from having fuch a conformity to the pure and perfect law of God, in your thoughts, words, and actions, and the principles from which they ought to flow, as can entitle you to his favor, that the imaginations of your hearts are only evil from your youth, and that continually. Whatever imaginary fchemes of a virtuous character you may reft or glory in, you are wholly unable to ftand the trial of God's impartial judgment. Oh! how hard is it to convince men of fin, even while the earth groans under their guilt? Would but thofe who are moft apt to boaft of the dignity of their nature, and the perfection of their virtue, make an exact regifter of all the thoughts that arife in their minds; there remains ftill as much of the law of God written upon their hearts, as would judge them out of their own mouths. Inftead of being able to bear that fuch a record fhould be expofed to public view, they could not even endure themfelves to perufe it: for felf-flattery is their ruling character, but felf-abhorrence would be the effect of this difcovery. Ought you not therefore to be ready to acknowledge, that you are altogether as an unclean thing, and unable to ftand before God if he enter into judgment? But whether you acknowledge it or not, I bear from God himfelf this meffage to you all, that whatever may be your character, formed upon worldly maxims, and animated by ambitious and worldly views, if you are not reconciled to God through Jefus Chrift, if you are not clothed with the fpotlefs robe of his righteoufnefs, you muft for ever perifh.

But behold, through this man is preached unto you the forgivenefs of fins. There is a fulnefs of merit in his obedience and death to procure your pardon. There is no fin of fo deep a dye, or fo infectious a ftain, but his blood is fufficient to wafh it out. This is no new doctrine, or

modern diſcovery, to gratify a curious mind. Perhaps you have heard ſuch things ſo often, that you nauſeate and diſdain the repetition. But they are the words of eternal life, on which your ſouls' ſalvation abſolutely depends; and therefore, though this call ſhould come but once more to be rejected, it is yet again within your offer; and as "an ambaſſador from Chriſt, as though God did beſeech "you by me, I pray you in Chriſt's ſtead be ye reconciled "unto God." You have heard the danger of all who are without Chriſt; but I beſeech you remember the aggravated guilt, and the ſuperior danger of thoſe who continue obſtinate under the goſpel. All the mercy that is ſhown to ſinners in the offer, ſhall inflame the charge againſt them in the great day, if they are found impenitent. Mercy and juſtice are never ſeparated in any part of the goſpel plan. They illuſtrate each other in the contrivance, they ſhine together on the croſs, and they ſhall be jointly manifeſt in the day of judgment. Shall not the blood of Chriſt, which is ſo powerful in its influence for taking away the guilt of thoſe who truſt in it, greatly add to the guilt and danger of thoſe who deſpiſe it? "Be wiſe now, "therefore, O ye kings," and all of every rank; "be in-"ſtructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with "fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiſs the Son, leſt he "be angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath "is kindled but a little: bleſſed are all they that put their "truſt in him."*a*

a Pſal. ii. 10, 11, 12.

AN

INQUIRY

INTO THE

SCRIPTURE MEANING

OF

CHARITY.

IN a note in the ſermon on Acts iv. 12. "Neither is "there ſalvation in any other," the reader will find, that I have intimated two things: 1. That if a favorable judgment of the opinions of others, be the ſcripture meaning of *charity*, then certainly ſome bounds muſt be ſet to it; and it muſt be praiſe or blame worthy, according to the caſes in which it is exerciſed. 2. That I am inclined to think, that this is not the meaning of the word in ſcripture; but that it means an ardent and unfeigned love to others, and a deſire of their welfare, temporal and eternal; and may very well conſiſt with the ſtrongeſt abhorrence of their wicked principles, and the deepeſt concern for their dangerous ſtate. At the ſame time it was hinted, that this ſubject deſerved a more diſtinct and full illuſtration. I was ſufficiently aware, even at the time of writing, that this declaration would bring down upon me the high diſpleaſure of certain perſons. And ſo indeed it happened, to ſuch a degree, that ſome, according to their wonted candor, and (in their own ſenſe) moſt charitable interpre-

tation, have affirmed, that I had in that paſſage, openly declared againſt charity. This hath induced me, on notice of a ſecond edition being intended, to offer a few reflections on this ſubject; which I hope ſhall be conducted in as cool and critical a manner, as can in reaſon be deſired, that I may not offend againſt charity, even when writing upon the ſubject.

Let me begin by ſettling preciſely the ſubject of the inquiry. It will, or at leaſt ought to be, acknowledged, that with many the current meaning of the word *charity* is, to have a favorable opinion of the ſentiments of others, who are ſuppoſed to differ from us; that is to ſay (for it is not very eaſy to define it clearly) to think, that they are innocently miſtaken in judgment, and that they have as honeſtly inquired after truth as ourſelves; and therefore to conclude, that as perſons truly ſincere, and acting according to their light, they ſhall meet with the final acceptance of God. That this is the meaning with many, if it ſhould be denied, I prove from the following circumſtance, that charity in ſentiment, or charity in general (except when it is taken in a limited ſenſe, as ſignifying bounty to the poor) is always applied to thoſe who differ from us, and never to thoſe who agree with us; and indeed it is about the difference that it is ſuppoſed to be exerciſed.

1. Now, the *firſt* thing I obſerve upon this is, that if the above be the ſcripture meaning of charity, then certainly ſome bounds muſt be ſet to it; and it muſt be praiſe or blame-worthy according to the caſes in which it is exerciſed. I make this ſuppoſition, becauſe though it is propoſed in the courſe of theſe remarks, to ſhow, that the above is not the ſcripture meaning of the word; yet there is really, within certain limits, a duty of this kind preſcribed to us in ſcripture, but never called *charity*. The duty I mean is mutual forbearance, and guarding againſt raſh judgment; but it is remarkable, that neither in the deſcription of this duty, nor in the arguments urging to the practice of it, is the word *charity*, or the neceſſity of charity, ever once introduced.[a] The proper objects of

[a] I do not know whether I ſhould call it an exception from this, that in one paſſage, when the Apoſtle Paul is ſpeaking of

forbearance are matters of indifference, or rather matters of comparatively ſmall moment; and the ſin of raſh judging conſiſts in believing things to be of more moment than they are, and attributing outward actions or expreſſions to bad motives or principles, without neceſſity. I ſay, without neceſſity; becauſe it is allowed by every judicious and accurate writer upon raſh judging, that a perſon cannot be chargeable with this ſin, merely for thinking ill of another's temper or practice, upon clear and irreſiſtible evidence. To do otherwiſe, in many caſes, is either wholly impoſſible, or argues a weakneſs of underſtanding; which cannot be the object of approbation, nor conſequently of imitation.

Let us therefore ſuppoſe, that this duty of forbearance, which indeed I take to be wholly diſtinct in its nature, is the charity ſo ſtrongly recommended, and ſo highly applauded in ſcripture, and that it is to be exerciſed with regard to the opinions of others. In that caſe it muſt have certain bounds, for the following reaſons,

1. If it were otherwiſe, we ſhould then either want a meaning for many declarations and precepts in ſcripture; or, which is worſe, ſhould perceive them to be evidently abſurd and ill founded. That I may not tire the reader, I ſhall not adduce the tenth part of what is ſaid on this ſubject in ſcripture; but muſt beg of him to weigh the following paſſages, and to make ſome reflections on their manifeſt purpoſe: Jude v. 3, 4, "Beloved, when I gave "all diligence to write unto you of the common ſalvati- "on, it was needful for me to write unto you, and ex- "hort you, that ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the faith "which was once delivered unto the ſaints. For there "are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of

the oppoſite ſins, of judging others on the one hand, or deſpiſing them on the other, he introduces walking charitably. But it is in a ſenſe quite oppoſite to what it would have been uſed in by one pleading for the modern charity. It is not the man who judges raſhly that he charges with uncharitableneſs, but him who deſpiſeth his weak brother, and is at no pains to avoid giving offence: Rom. xiv. 15. "But if thy brother be "grieved with thy meat, now walkeſt thou not charitably. "Deſtroy not him with thy meat for whom Chriſt died."

" old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turn-
" ing the grace of our God into lafciviouſneſs, and deny-
" ing the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt."—
Here I think is plainly a duty with regard to opinions, altogether different from that of forbearance. The one requires us not ſo much as to judge our brethren; the other requires us to contend earneſtly with them. The one ſuppoſes the trifling difference to be wholly buried; the other implies, that it ſhould be kept clearly in view, and all poſſible pains taken to ſupport the truth, and to refute the error. The one ſuppoſes entire peace and union; the other implies a firm and reſolute oppoſition, ſo as to come to no terms which imply conſent or approbation. The phraſeology through the whole paſſage teaches us to interpret it as I have done; "There are certain men," ſays he, "crept in unawares;" plainly ſignifying, that if they had not crept in ſecretly, they would not, or ought not to have been ſuffered to come in openly. Now, if charity and forbearance be the ſame thing, here are ſome perſons deſcribed, whom we are not to forbear, and conſequently for whom we are to have no charity: therefore it muſt have ſome limitation. Let it be as extenſive as you will, it is not boundleſs.

Titus i. 10, 11, 13. "For there are many unruly and
" vain talkers and deceivers, eſpecially they of the cir-
" cumciſion: whoſe mouths muſt be ſtopped, who ſubvert
" whole houſes, teaching things which they ought not, for
" filthy lucre's ſake.—Wherefore, rebuke them ſharply,
" that they may be found in the faith." Now, let me aſk any unprejudiced reader, whether ſharp rebuke be not a very different thing from forbearance? How can you rebuke thoſe whom you may not ſo much as judge? or why ſhould you attempt to make them ſound in the faith, if they are already received of God? As it is expreſſed, Rom. xiv. 3. Beſides, what is the meaning of ſubverting whole houſes? and of ſtopping the mouths of the falſe teachers, to prevent or remedy this ſubverſion? In the ſame epiſtle, chap. iii. 10. the apoſtle ſays, "A man that
" is an heretic, after the firſt and ſecond admonition, re-
" ject." Does not this ſuppoſe, that it is poſſible for a

man to be a heretic? Does not the apoſtle here ordain a ſentence of expulſion to be paſſed againſt him, after the pains taken to reclaim him appear to be fruitleſs? It is plain, therefore, that if charity be the ſame with forbearance, it muſt have limits; for if every body muſt be forborn, then certainly nobody can be expelled.

I muſt not here paſs by an aſtoniſhing interpretation put by ſome, and men of learning too, upon the following verſe of the ſame chapter: "Knowing that he that is ſuch, "is ſubverted and ſinneth, being condemned of himſelf;" that is, ſay ſome, no man is an heretic in the ſenſe of this paſſage, but who is ſelf-condemned, or is acting contrary to his own conviction; ſo that he muſt be rejected, not for the error of his judgment, but for the obſtinacy and depravation of his heart. I do not remember to have ſeen any ſtronger inſtance of the power of prejudice, than giving ſuch a ſenſe to the word *self-condemned*. If any man can really conceive a caſe in his own mind, of a heretic obſtinately perſiſting in his error, and ſuffering for it, in oppoſition to his own inward conviction, and at the ſame time this circumſtance clearly aſcertained as the foundation of his ſentence, I wiſh he would teach me how to conceive it: at preſent it ſeems to me utterly impoſſible. If any perſon thus ſpeaks lies in hypocriſy, is it to be ſuppoſed, that he will confeſs it? and if he do not confeſs, how is it poſſible to prove it? The plain meaning of being condemned of himſelf, in this paſſage, is, that his errors are ſo contradictory to the other articles of his faith, ſuch an abjuration of his former profeſſion, and generally tend ſo much to immorality in practice, that he is condemned as it were out of his own mouth.

In the 2d epiſtle of John, the apoſtle ſays, ver. 9, 10, 11. "Whoſoever tranſgreſſeth, and abideth not in the doctrine "of Chriſt, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine "of Chriſt, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there "come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive "him not into your houſe; neither bid him God ſpeed: "for he that biddeth him God ſpeed, is partaker of his evil "deeds." I ſhall not ſtay to examine nicely the import of not receiving ſuch a one into our houſe, and not bidding

him God ſpeed. It is ſufficient for my purpoſe, that no ſenſe can be put upon it low enough to make it agreeable to the treatment we ought to give to our brethren whom we are forbidden to judge. Theſe we are to receive, as Chriſt hath received them, and to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

To all theſe I only add, without any reflection upon it, the reproof of Chriſt to the church of Pergamos: Rev. ii. 14. "But I have a few things againſt thee, becauſe thou "haſt there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who "taught Balac to caſt a ſtumbling-block before the children "of Iſrael, to eat things ſacrificed unto idols, and to com- "mit fornication. So haſt thou alſo them that hold the "doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."

2. If charity be the ſame with forbearance, it muſt have limits, or it would be the ſtrongeſt impeachment of divine wiſdom and goodneſs, in not giving marks ſufficiently clear to diſtinguiſh truth from falſehood. If we are to entertain a favorable opinion of the ſentiments and ſtate of others, it muſt be entirely founded on the ſuppoſition, that they have inquired with honeſty and impartiality; and that they are not blinded by prejudice or corrupt paſſions. This I ſuppoſe will be readily allowed; becauſe it is the uſual way of ſpeaking or writing on the ſubject. 'They may be miſtaken,' it is often ſaid, 'but without 'their fault: they may have freely and impartially inqui- 'red, and yet may, after all, think differently with equal 'ſincerity.' This, I contend, can only hold in matters of ſmall moment, and in themſelves of a doubtful nature; and in theſe, the obſervation is juſt, and correſponds with reaſon, ſcripture, and experience. But in truths of the higheſt moment, if there are any ſuch at all, to ſuppoſe that men equally ſincere and impartial, may, notwithſtanding, have ſentiments directly oppoſite, ſeems to me an impeach- ment of divine wiſdom. How can it be, unleſs the evi- dences for and againſt them, be pretty equally balanced? How is the judgment determined at all, but by a ſort of compound *ratio*, to ſpeak in the language of mathemati- cians, of the outward evidence, and the prepoſſeſſion of the mind? Strong prepoſſeſſions will account for any opi-

nion, however abſurd; but if two perſons of equal capacity, and equal integrity, draw oppoſite concluſions on any queſtion, it muſt certainly ariſe from the doubtfulneſs of the queſtion itſelf. Now, if there be any truths of moment not attended with ſufficient evidence, how can we acquit or juſtify the conduct of Providence? There does not ſeem to me to be any alternative; but we muſt lay the blame either upon the evidence, or the mind; that is to ſay, in other words, it muſt be put to the charge either of God or man.

3. If charity is the ſame thing with forbearance, it muſt have ſome limits; otherwiſe the value of truth itſelf is abſolutely annihilated. If I am to believe a man in as ſafe a ſtate, and as much accepted of God, in one opinion as another, upon all ſubjects, it is plain, not only that every truth is of equal moment with another, but that truth and error are of equal value. This, I think, is indiſputable; for if it makes no difference, either in point of character or ſtate, I ſee nothing elſe from which their value can be eſtimated. What then becomes of all the fine encomiums we have on the beauty, the excellence, the importance of truth? the neceſſity and benefit of freedom of inquiry? It would be much better to be ſatisfied with any opinions, be they what they will, than to give way to doubts and ſuſpicions, to fatigue our minds, and waſte our time in long and difficult reſearches. If it be ſaid, that they may be the ſame as to the ſincerity of the inquirer, but different principles may have different effects in practice; this is yielding up the point in debate: for if one opinion leads to holineſs, and another to wickedneſs, in practice, they can never be in the ſame ſtate of ſafety, nor equally acceptable to God, who hold theſe oppoſite ſentiments. Beſides, it is common with the advocates for this miſtaken ſort of charity, in order the better to ſupport their opinion, to deny this difference in effect, and to ſay, 'It is no matter what a man's opinions are, if his 'life be good.' Now, it is evident, that this aſſertion is abſurd; or rather the ſuppoſition is impoſſible, unleſs the influence of truth and falſehood upon the life, be abſolutely equal. Grant but the leaſt ſuperiority or advantage to one

above the other, and the argument is deſtroyed; for if truth be better than falſehood, it muſt be ſome matter what a man's opinions are, in order to his life's being good. How weak and inconſiſtent creatures are we! The very ſame perſons who make the greateſt ſtir about a pretended ſearch after truth, and freedom of inquiry, will needs have it, that Chriſtian charity implies, that all opinions are alike, and ought to be treated with equal reſpect: and then, to crown all, they give us the moſt hideous pictures of the terrible effects of ſuperſtition, and certain religious ſentiments which they are pleaſed to condemn. Alas! where is the charity then? Are all opinions equal? Is it no matter what a man's opinions are, if his life be good? At laſt you have found out ſome whoſe lives are ill by the impulſe of their opinions. Certainly, charity, in the ſenſe of forbearance or approbation, is not due to them.

4. If charity is the ſame with forbearance, it muſt have ſome limits; becauſe otherwiſe things would be carried to an extravagant length; and ſuch caſes might be ſuppoſed as very few would be willing to admit, and indeed I think no man can rationally admit. I might give a multitude of poſſible examples; but, for the greater ſatisfaction of the reader, ſhall only mention a few that are real.

(1) Within the Chriſtian church, there are not only different, but oppoſite opinions, and mutually deſtructive of each other. Thoſe who hold them, on each ſide, not only ſay, but think, that their adverſaries are guilty of impiety and blaſphemy. Let us take for inſtance, the Calviniſts and Socinians. Read the writings of the firſt, and you will ſee, that they conſider their adverſaries as taking away the very foundation of the goſpel, denying the only Lord God that bought them, and as guilty of groſs idolatry in giving divine worſhip to one whom they believe to be a creature. Again, if you read the writings of the laſt, you will find them charging their adverſaries with blaſphemy of the moſt horrible nature, and not only making a god different from the true God, but ſuch a one as is more cruel and vindictive than the very devils.—Now, I deſire to know how the one of theſe ſorts of perſons can have a favorable opinion of the ſtate and ſenti-

ments of the oppoſite, without renouncing their own? I do freely acknowledge, as I have formerly done, that I never did eſteem the Socinians to be Chriſtians; and yet find nothing more eaſy, or indeed more neceſſary, than to have charity for them, in what I take to be the ſcripture ſenſe of that word. But in the modern ſenſe it appears to me utterly impoſſible. For the very ſame reaſon, if any who had embraced theſe principles ſhould pretend, that he had ſuch charity for me, as to eſteem and receive me as a faithful miniſter of Chriſt, I would conſider it as a profeſſion altogether hypocritical, or that he did not believe a word of his own ſyſtem. The truth is, I cannot help thinking, from the manner of conducting theological controverſies, that it is very common for many to plead for that charity to themſelves which they never give to their adverſaries; while the power of prejudice hinders them from obſerving the inconſiſtency between their reaſoning and practice.*a*

(2) Thoſe who deny and oppoſe the goſpel altogether, have juſt the ſame title to our charity, and we are obliged to believe, that they are honeſt and impartial inquirers, and therefore accepted of God. Now, if there be any thing in the world clear from ſcripture, it is, that we are not to approve or receive ſuch perſons; that they are not the objects of forbearance; and, by conſequence, not of that charity that conſiſts in forbearance: on the contrary, the zeal and activity of the apoſtles was wholly employed in bringing unbelievers to the knowledge and confeſſion of the truth; for which they deſerve very little praiſe, if their ſtate was ſafe, and their character unexceptionable, before. And as to perſon among us denying the goſpel,

a I could give many inſtances of this ſurpriſing inadvertency in writers of the very firſt character: I ſhall only mention one, of the renowned earl of Shafteſbury. His darling theme is, to ſhow, that every thing whatever is for the general good; that even the worſt men are guided at bottom by a benevolent principle; yet even while expatiating on the goodneſs of the whole ſyſtem of beings, he takes every opportunity of falling upon the clergy, whom he allows to be purely evil, without containing any good, or tendency to promote it: A defect in his own ſcheme, to which he doth not ſeem to have attended.

after examination, I do not see how any person can think them impartial in rejecting it, without a very poor opinion of the evidence for receiving it.

(3) Even in point of morals, there have been, and are at this time, opinions so very gross, that few will look upon the state of those who hold them as safe; and yet if forbearance is charity, and the charity is unlimited, they must also be taken in. There have been several, who certainly were sincerely of opinion, that fornication and other uncleanness, was lawful. So great a man as David Hume, esq. has adopted a sentence from a French writer: "Female infidelity, when it is known, is a small "matter; and when it is not known, it is nothing."—The very same writer seems also either to defend, or greatly to alleviate, unnatural lust. And many highwaymen have actually reasoned themselves into an opinion of the lawfulness of robbery, by alledging, that God never made the world with this view, that some should have too much and others should starve; and therefore they had a right to a share, and might levy it wherever they could find it. The truth is, there are more of these gross and erroneous opinions than many are aware of; for men are seldom at ease on the commission of sin, till they have found some way to satisfy their own minds, by wrong principles.—Well, are we to think all these honest and impartial inquirers, and to have charity for them in the sense so often mentioned? I imagine some will at last stop short, and say, there is a distinction to be made; these opinions are formed by the influence of prejudice, and the bias of corrupt affections. Here then your charity fails, and you have set limits to your forbearance; or rather you have given up the cause; for all false opinions arise from the the bias of corrupt affections. The fallacy of the whole arguments on this subject lies in confounding two things very different, viz. a man's being truly of an opinion, and his being so upon fair and unprejudiced inquiry. A train of reasoning carried on, which is built upon the last of these suppositions, and applied to cases where only the first takes place. Perhaps some may chuse to say, as to the case of immoral opinions, that men are not to

be diſapproved or condemned for the opinion in itſelf, but for preſuming to act in conſequence of it. To which I anſwer, That if any man will prove the innocence of forming ſuch opinions, I will undertake to prove, with at leaſt equal evidence, the obligation that lies upon every one ſo perſuaded, to act according to his light.

5. In the laſt place, To ſuppoſe that charity is the ſame thing with forbearance, and yet that it is unlimited, is ſelf-contradictory, and impoſſible, in many inſtances, to be put in practice. True Chriſtian charity being the indiſpenſable duty of all, muſt at leaſt be poſſible to all, and conſiſtent with every other duty. Now, to believe the ſafety of the ſtate, or the goodneſs of the character of many perſons for whom charity is pleaded, may be to ſome abſolutely impoſſible. They may have a conviction of the contrary in their judgment. They may think, that the ſcripture clearly and explicitly commands them to ſeparate from ſuch people, to oppoſe and deteſt their errors; and ſurely there are many much more abſurd and groundleſs opinions truly entertained. What then ſhall they do? The ſcripture commands them to contend with erroneous perſons; and if they do, they are guilty of a breach of charity, one of the moſt eſſential of all goſpel duties; for the apoſtle tells us, "Though I ſpeak with the tongue of men "and angels, and have not charity, I am become as ſound-"ing braſs, or a tinkling cymbal."

Thus, I hope it has been proved, to the ſatisfaction of all impartial perſons, that if charity, in ſcripture, is the ſame thing with that forbearance we owe to others who differ from us, it muſt have ſome bounds, and be praiſe or blame-worthy, according to the caſes in which it is exerciſed. If it be aſked, Who ſhall ſtate the bounds beyond which it is not to extend? I anſwer, Every one for himſelf, according to the beſt of his own judgment. Some perhaps will contend with, or judge others, for things in which they ought to forbear them; but many others will carry their forbearance too far, and retain erroneous or vicious perſons in their ſociety, when they ought to expel them. For this there is no remedy, as it is the conſequence of the weakneſs of human nature, and no

way different from what happens as to every duty incumbent on us as men or Chriſtians.

II. Let us now come to the ſecond part of this diſcourſe, and conſider what reaſon there is to to believe, that charity in ſcripture, is a duty altogether diſtinct from forbearance, and founded on diſtinct principles.

One general conſideration will go nigh to prove this of itſelf, viz. That forbearance, as has been ſhewn in the preceding pages, hath limits, beyond which it is culpable; whereas charity hath none, at leaſt as to its object. There is no perſon or character that can be conceived, for which we are allowed to be without charity. With reſpect to forbearance, the object of it is clearly pointed out in the paſſages where it is ſpoken of, and is the difference of opinion as to ſmaller matters, viz. the lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of meats and drinks, and whether certain days were holy or common. But there is no paſſage in which charity is ſpoken of, that gives the leaſt hint, or indeed that leaves room to ſuppoſe that it hath any limits as to its object. Charity, we are told, is "the end," or ſum, "of the commandment." And indeed it is the ſame thing with love, which is the fulfilling of the law. And in the explication which our Lord gives of the ſum of the ſecond table of the law, in anſwer to that queſtion, Who is my neighbor? he plainly teaches us by the parable of the Samaritan, that all men are our neighbors. There was a great oppoſition, in point of religion, between the Jews and Samaritans; yet he ſhews plainly, that this ought not to obſtruct the exerciſe of charity, in the true ſenſe of that word. For this reaſon, I think it highly probable, that forbearance is different from charity; the one points out our duty to our fellow Chriſtians in certain circumſtances, and the other includes our duty to our fellow-creatures at all times.

This will be confirmed, by reflecting that the word which, in ſome places, is tranſlated *charity*, is the ſame, in all other paſſages without variation in any one of them, with that is tranſlated *love*. *agapè* is the New Teſtament word for *charity*, which, as it is generally tranſlated *love*, ſo I do

not ſee the leaſt reaſon for altering the tranſlation, in thoſe places where charity is ſubſtituted in its room. Charity then is *love;* that is to ſay, it is a ſincere and fervent affection to others, and a deſire of their welfare, temporal and eternal. This not only may conſiſt with, but of itſelf naturally produces, the ſtrongeſt abhorrence of their wicked principles, and the deepeſt concern for their dangerous ſtate. There is a great affinity between the ſentiments we ought to entertain with regard to error and vice. Our love to vicious perſons ought not to carry in it any approbation or indulgence of their vices, and far leſs any belief of the ſafety of their ſtate; but an earneſt concern to bring about their reformation. In the ſame manner, a ſincere and fervent charity for erroneous perſons, does not imply any approbation of their opinions, or ſuppoſition of their conſiſtency with ſoundneſs in the faith, but an earneſt deſire to recover them, if poſſible, from their unhappy deluſion. Nay, though a man be ſo narrow-minded, as to judge thoſe whom he ought to forbear, it may, very poſſibly, be attended with no breach of charity; becauſe there may be as much love to his neighbor in that perſon's heart, and as much concern for his welfare, as if he had ſeen more clearly his own miſtake. The apoſtle Paul calls theſe *weak* perſons, and aſcribes their conduct to the imperfections of their judgment. It was the ſtrong, or thoſe who had more knowledge, that he blamed, as not walking *charitably*, when they would not abſtain from meat, to prevent their brethren's offence.

It will be an additional confirmation of this meaning of *charity*, that it makes the ſeveral duties of Chriſtians at once clear and intelligible, and conſiſtent one with another, by leaving to each its full ſcope, and its proper object. If we take *charity* in the ſenſe which I have rejected, there will be a continual oppoſition between zeal and charity; and in proportion as you increaſe in any one of them, you muſt neceſſarily fail in the other. And indeed this ſeems to be verified in experience; for thoſe who eſpouſe this ſort of charity, do frequently fall into ſo cool a ſtate in point of zeal, that they give themſelves little trouble, either in inſtructing the ignorant, or reproving the

vicious; and are not backward in ſtigmatizing thoſe, as narrow-minded and uncharitable, who do. But if we take charity for unfeigned love, then, inſtead of oppoſition, there is the moſt perfect harmony between one duty and another. So far from hindering, or even limiting each other in their exerciſe, they ſtrengthen each other in principle, and direct each other in their application.—The more fervent love I have for my fellow-creatures and my fellow-chriſtians, it will but excite my zeal to promote their benefit, by endeavoring to convince them of any dangerous miſtake, and deliver them from the dominion of every vicious practice. At the ſame time, this love will naturally produce forbearance, where it is lawful and proper; becauſe, if I love any perſon ſincerely, I will judge of him candidly, and not impute any bad ſentiment or practice to him without neceſſity. It will prevent us from interfering with others where we ought not, and will urge us to activity and diligence where the caſe ſeems really to call for it.

This ſubject may be well illuſtrated by parental affection, when it is both ſtrong in its principle, and well directed in its exerciſe. It will certainly prevent a parent from judging hardly of his children, or being eaſily incenſed againſt them, on wrong or doubtful information: but it will be ſo far from making him think favorably of their miſtakes, either in principle or practice, that the more tender his love, the greater his concern to prevent their being miſled, or to recover them if they have gone aſtray. Examples to be ſure there are many, of a ſort of love in parents to their children, that operates like the falſe charity I am now pleading againſt, making them blind to their failings, and even partial to their crimes: but I think it muſt be allowed, that all ſuch partiality and indulgence is a weakneſs, inſtead of a virtue, in the parent, and is commonly a curſe, inſtead of a bleſſing, to the child. To have juſt apprehenſions of the ſeveral duties of the Chriſtian life, we muſt always conſider their relation to, and dependance upon one another. There are ſome ſins oppoſite to, and deſtructive of each other; but there is no truly good diſpoſition, that is not perfectly

conſiſtent with, or rather that does not improve and ſtrengthen every other. It is remarkable, that in ſcripture, the duties of reproof and correction are frequently attributed to love as their principle, not only in God, but in man: "Whom the Lord loveth he chaſtiſeth, and "ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth."—"He that "ſpareth the rod, hateth his ſon; but he that loveth him, "chaſteneth him betimes."—"Thou ſhalt not hate thy "neighbor in thy heart; but ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke him, "and not ſuffer ſin upon him."

Upon the whole, ſince this interpretation of charity is not only moſt agreeable to ſcripture, but moſt conſiſtent with itſelf, and with every other branch of the Chriſtian character, I hope it will be received, at leaſt ſo far as to leſſen the cry of uncharitableneſs againſt thoſe who, from the united principles of love to God and man, think themſelves obliged to oppoſe the progreſs of groſs error. I plead for this only when they make uſe of juſt and lawful means, and act in a manner becoming Chriſtians, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves. For though I have ſhewn, that true charity is as favorable to zeal as to forbearance, and to both alike in their proper place, I am ſenſible that there may be zeal where there is little or no charity; and, in that caſe, it will ſhew itſelf in "wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, hereſies." This happens chiefly, when a weak perſon who judges raſhly, is alſo of an envious or malicious diſpoſition. The firſt of theſe may be ſometimes without the other; they may, however, alſo be joined in the ſame perſon; and then it will certainly be attended with "confuſion, and every evil work." But when a deep ſenſe of the evil of departing from the faith to the perſons themſelves, and the danger of corrupt doctrine infecting the whole lump, induces any to ſtand up in defence of the truth, to oppoſe the introduction of erroneous teachers, or to attempt the expulſion of thoſe who have crept in unawares; let them be called unreaſonable if you pleaſe, and let their miſtake be pointed out, but I beg that they may not be abuſed and vilified as uncharitable. The reaſon of my requeſt is, that it is more than probable they do this from a ſtrong conviction, that they

are obliged to it by the expreſs command of Chriſt. I declare this to be my own perſuaſion, after the moſt impartial ſearch of the ſcriptures of which I was capable; and certainly it is at leaſt poſſible, that we may have, notwithſtanding, a fervent love to our brethren, and a deſire of their welfare. We may love them as men, even when we cannot judge them to be ſaints; and we may love them as Chriſtians, even when we think they are in many things to be blamed; nay, I hope we may heartily forgive them as enemies, notwithſtanding all their bitterneſs and rancor againſt us. But if, after all, this requeſt cannot be obtained; if we cannot alter our judgment, and they will ſtill inſiſt that we are therefore without charity, that is to ſay, without chriſtianity; they muſt confeſs, that here is one opinion which they will not tolerate, and to which, in their own ſenſe, no charity is due.

THE TRIAL OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH BY ITS MORAL INFLUENCE.

SERMON 38.

Preached at the opening of the Synod of Glaſgow and Air, October 9th, 1759.

MATTHEW vii. 20.

Wherefore, by their fruits ye ſhall know them.

EVERY one who hath any acquaintance with the writings of infidels, muſt know that there is no topic on which they inſiſt at greater length, or with more plauſibility, than the innumerable ſects and parties into which the Chriſtian world is divided. With what apparent triumph do they enlarge, on the contradictory tenets, which different perſons profeſs to found upon the ſame ſcriptures, their violent oppoſition one to another, and the great difficulty, or rather impoſſibility of diſcovering truth, among ſo many, who pretend each to have the entire and excluſive poſſeſſion of it.

Having gone thus far, it is eaſy and natural to proceed one ſtep farther, and affirm, that the great plurality of every denomination, do not embrace religion in general, or the tenets of their own ſect in particular, from rational or perſonal conviction, but from a blind imitation of others, or an attachment to one or a few diſtinguiſhed

leaders, whose authority is stronger than all other evidence whatever. Thus is religion, at once, supposed true, and yet destroyed; that is to say, it is at one stroke, as it were, annihilated, in almost all who profess it, their opinions, whatever they are in themselves, being no more than implicit faith and party prejudice in those who embrace them.

The same visible state of the world, which gives occasion of triumph to the enemies of religion, gives often, no small uneasiness and anxiety to its friends, particularly to the best and most dispassionate of every party. Serious and conscientious persons, when they reflect upon the divisions that prevail, when they are witnesses to the contention and mutual accusation of different parties, are ready to be overwhelmed with melancholy upon the prospect, as well as involved in doubt and perplexity, as to what course they themselves should hold. It is not uncommon to find persons of every rank, in this situation, not only those of better education, who are able to take an extensive view of the state of things, in this and in preceding ages; but also those of less knowledge and comprehension, when any violent debates happen to fall within the sphere of their own observation.

These reasons have induced me to make choice of the passage now read as the subject of discourse at this time. It contains the rule to which our Saviour appeals in his controversy with the Pharisees, and by which he, once and again, desires that their pretensions may be judged. I apprehend from the context, that it is equally applicable to their characters and their principles, their integrity before God in their offices of teachers of others, and the soundness of their doctrine as to its effects upon those who should receive it. These two things are, indeed, in a great measure connected together, or rather they are mutually involved in one another, though it is possible, and, in some few cases, profitable, to make a distinction between them.

What is further proposed, through the assistance of divine grace, in the prosecution of this subject, is,

I. To ſhow, that the rule here given by our Saviour is the beſt that could have been given, and that it is ſufficient to diſtinguiſh truth from error.

II. That this is in fact the rule by which all good men, and, indeed, mankind in general, ſo far as they are ſincere, do judge, of religious principles and pretenſions.

III. To conclude with ſome reflections on the ſubject for the benefit both of miniſters and people.

In the firſt place then it is propoſed to ſhow, That the rule here given by our Saviour is the beſt that could have been given, and that it is ſufficient to diſtinguiſh truth from error. To lay a foundation for this, it will be neceſſary to begin by ſettling, in as preciſe a manner as poſſible, the meaning of the rule, and to what caſes it can be juſtly applied. "Ye ſhall know them by their fruits," ſaith our Saviour.—That is to ſay, when any perſon aſſumes the character of a divine teacher, and propoſes any thing to your belief, as from God, ſee whether its fruits be really ſuitable to its pretenſions: particularly you are to lay down this as a principle, that, as he is holy in his nature, every thing that proceeds from him muſt be holy in its tendency, and produce holineſs as its fruit. In proportion as you ſee this effect in him who teaches it, and thoſe who embrace it, ſo receive it as true, or reject it as falſe.

By laying down the rule in theſe terms, I do not mean to deny, that, when a revelation is firſt propoſed as from God, or when the credit of ſuch revelation in general is examined, miracles are a diſtinct and concluſive proof of a divine commiſſion. I am perſuaded that nothing is more vague and indeterminate, and at the ſame time, a more manifeſt inverting the natural order of things, than to ſay with ſome, We muſt judge of the truth of a miracle by the nature of the doctrine in ſupport of which it is wrought; and, if this laſt is worthy of God, we may then admit the honorary teſtimony of the mighty work in its behalf.—They do not attend to the great ignorance of man in all ſpiritual and divine things without revelation, and to the

boldneſs of human pride, who ſpeak in this manner. I would rather include this as one of the proper fruits of a divine commiſſion to teach any new doctrine, that ſigns be given of a ſuperior power accompanying the prophet. Thus we ſee the Jews made this demand of our Saviour, "What ſign ſheweſt thou then, that we may ſee and be-"lieve thee? What doſt thou work?"*a* It is true, in ſome inſtances, when, after many miracles, they perſiſted in aſking new ſigns of their own deviſing, he condemns their obſtinacy and refuſes to gratify it. Notwithſtanding this, we find him often appealing to his works as an atteſtation of the truth of his miſſion: thus he ſays, "Be-"lieve me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, "or elſe believe me for the very work's ſake."*b* And elſewhere, "If I had not done among them the works that "none other man did, they had not had ſin: but now "they have both ſeen, and hated both me and my Fa-"ther."*c* Agreeably to this, we find Nicodemus drawing the concluſion, "Rabbi, we know thou art a teacher "come from God, for no man can do the miracles that "thou doſt, except God be with him."*d*

There is no doubt, however, that this muſt be inſeparably joined with a purity of character, and ſanctity of purpoſe. When theſe are wanting, it gives the juſteſt ground of ſuſpicion, leads to the ſtricteſt examination of miraculous pretenſions, and will certainly end in the diſcovery of ſuch as are falſe. For this is the very excellence of the rule laid down by our Saviour, that, though reaſon may be very unfit to paſs an independent judgment upon truth and error, conſcience may, with little danger of miſtake, reject what is evil, and yield its approbation to what is good.

But what I have chiefly in view is, that ſuppoſing the truth of the goſpel in general, particular opinions and practices muſt be tried in this manner. As the goſpel is allowed on all hands to be a doctrine according to godlineſs, when differences ariſe, and each oppoſite ſide pre-

a John vi. 30. *b* John xiv. 11. *c* John xv. 24.

d John iii. 2.

tends to have the letter of the law in its favor, the great rule of decision is, which doth most immediately and most certainly, promote piety and holiness in all manner of conversation. In this way every doctrinal opinion, every form of government, and every rite and practice in worship, may be brought to the test, and tried by its fruits.

As opinions, so characters, must be tried in the same manner. The truth of this, though deserving particular mention, is included in, or is but a part and branch of the other. To pass a judgment on particular characters is of very small moment, or rather, a peremptory decision of this kind is both unnecessary and improper, unless when it is of weight in a cause. It is only prophets and teachers that fall to be singly, or personally tried, because they are supposed to exhibit, in their own practice, an example of the force and influence of their principles. If on them they have no effect that is good, there is not the least pretence for insisting that others should embrace them.

Nothing farther seems necessary by way of explication of this rule, save to observe from the context, that fair and plausible pretences, either of opinions or characters, must be examined with particular care, as being most ready to deceive; and the trial must be more by facts than by reasoning, as is implied in the very language used in the text, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The excellency of this rule may be comprehended under the two following particulars, 1st, Its certainty. 2dly, Its perspicuity.

The first of these will admit of little dispute. As God is infinitely holy in his own nature, every discovery that he has made to any of his creatures, must carry this impression upon it, and have a tendency to promote holiness in them. And, as this is manifestly the design of the sacred oracles, and that system of divine truth which they contain, every thing by way of opinion, or practice, that pretends to derive its authority from them, may lawfully be tried by this rule, Will it make us more holy than before?

It is of moment here to observe, that this rule hath a deep and solid foundation. It proceeds upon the suppos-

tion, that all natural are inferior to moral qualities; that even the nobleſt intellectual abilities are only ſo far valuable, as they are ſubſervient to moral perfection; or in other words, that truth is in order to goodneſs. It is not (as has been often ſaid) in his Almighty power, his infinite wiſdom, or the immenſity of his being, that the glory of God chiefly conſiſts, but in his immaculate holineſs and ſpotleſs purity. Each part of the divine character, indeed, derives a luſtre from the other. It is the union of greatneſs and goodneſs, that makes him truly God. His moral excellence becomes infinite in value and efficacy by reſiding in an infinite object. But if it were poſſible to ſeparate his natural perfection from his moral excellence, or could we ſuppoſe them joined to malignity of diſpoſition, he would be the proper object (let us ſpeak it with reverence) not of ſupreme love, but of infinite deteſtation.

This is more than ſufficient to ſupport the order in which things are repreſented above, and ſhow, that its moral influence is the proper touchſtone and trial of religious truth. Theſe doctrines only come from God, which tend to form us after the divine image. Thus far, perhaps, all will allow it to be true; at leaſt the aſſertion is common. But be pleaſed to obſerve, that this neceſſarily ſuppoſes the ſure and infallible efficacy of real truth in promoting holineſs, and the inſufficiency of error and falſhood for this purpoſe. If theſe were not both alike certain, the rule would be equivocal and abſurd. If men by believing lies could attain to unfeigned goodneſs and true holineſs, then their moral effect could not in the leaſt ſerve to diſtinguiſh between truth and error. It is no leſs plain that if ſo abſurd a ſuppoſition is admitted but for a moment, the value of truth is wholly deſtroyed, and no wiſe man will employ his time and pains in endavoring to diſcover, to communicate, or to defend it.

The other particular comprehended under the excellence of this rule, is its perſpicuity; That, it is not only ſure and infallible in itſelf, but capable of an eaſy application by thoſe who have occaſion to uſe it. Here, if any where, there is room for doubt and diſputation. Here, it

may be alledged, all the confusion and uncertainty returns, which was before complained of, and for which a remedy was required. Men will still differ in their opinions as to what is true goodness. Besides, they will still debate the sincerity of many pretensions, and the reality of many appearances; and, as art and hypocrisy will always be used on the one hand, delusion must be the unavoidable consequence on the other.

This, however, is no more than the necessary consequence of human imperfection. It cannot be denied, and it may, without any hesitation, be confessed, that men are liable to err, and that many have erred in the application of this rule. But, who can from thence justly infer, that it is not of sufficient clearness, to direct those who will honestly make use of it, and to lay the error of those who are misled entirely at their own door?

It pleased God to write his law upon the heart of man at first. And the great lines of duty, however obscured by our original apostacy, are still so visible, as to afford an opportunity of judging, what conduct and practice is, or is not agreeable to its dictates. It will be found from experience, that men are able to determine on this point, with far greater certainty, than on any other subject of religion: that is to say, they can perceive the excellency of the end, when they are in much doubt about the means, in themselves, or separately considered.

Such authority hath natural conscience still in man, that it renders those who, in their own conduct, despise its reproofs, inexcuseable in the sight of God.*a* But it is of importance in the present argument to observe, that every one is able to pass a far surer judgment on the moral character of another, than his own. The pollution of the heart brings a corrupt bias on the judgment, in a man's own case, and makes him palliate and defend those sins, to which he is strongly inclined, or of which he hath been already guilty: whereas in determining the characters of others, this bias is less sensibly felt. This is perhaps the true and only reason why any deference is paid

a Rom. i. 20.—ii. 14.

to virtue as praiſe-worthy, by thoſe who are enemies to it in their hearts, or any public honor and reſpect given to the ſervice of God in the world, where ſo great a majority are evidently in the intereſts of another maſter.

One ſingular excellence of this rule is, its being the moſt univerſally intelligible. It is level to the capacity of men of all degrees of underſtanding. There is little difference, if any, in this reſpect, between the wiſe and the unwiſe, the learned and the ignorant. Perhaps this circumſtance alone ought to give it, in juſtice, the preference, to every other teſt of religious truth. Religion is the concern of all alike, and therefore, what relates to it ſhould be open to all. It was the character, and the glory of the goſpel, at its firſt publication, that it was preached to the poor. And by this it is ſtill diſtinguiſhed, not only from many or moſt falſe religions, but eſpecially from thoſe philoſophical ſpeculations, in which the enemies of all religion place their chief ſtrength. When we peruſe a ſyſtem or theory of moral virtue, the principles of which are very refined, or the reaſoning upon it abſtracted and above the comprehenſion of the vulgar, it may be ingenious, but it carries in itſelf a demonſtration, that, becauſe it is unfit, it could never be intended for general uſe.

Here then, lies the great advantage of the rule laid down by our Saviour. The bulk of mankind, thoſe of lower rank, and even thoſe among them of weakeſt or leaſt cultivated underſtanding, are able to judge of the effects of principles, or to ſee the beauty of an excellent character, when they are not able to examine a doctrine, or apprehend the reaſoning upon which it is founded.—The dictates of conſcience are often immediate and clear, when the deductions of reaſon are long and involved. To make intricate reſearches in theory, requires great natural abilities, which are the portion of very few: but to judge of a viſible character requires only an impartial ſenſe of right and wrong. Of this the plain man is as ſuſceptible as the moſt acute by nature, or the moſt enlightened by education. In God Almighty, infinite knowledge and infinite holineſs are united, and, we have rea-

ſon to think, that in their perfection they are inſeparable. But we know, by experience, that they do not bear an exact proportion to one another in inferior natures, at leaſt, among ſinful creatures. There may be, and there often is great virtue and goodneſs in a mean capacity, and great depravity in perſons of eminent ability.

From theſe conſiderations it is plain, that this rule of trying a doctrine by its effects, as a tree by its fruits, may be applied by the meaneſt as well as the greateſt, and with as little danger of miſtake. Perhaps it might have been ſafely affirmed with leſs danger of miſtake. Great intellectual abilities, and great natural advantages of every kind, are very ready to ſwell the mind with pride and ſelf-conceit, than which no diſpoſition is in itſelf more odious in the ſight of God, or more unfavorable to the diſcovery of truth. This ſeems to be confirmed by experience, and it is plainly the view given us of our preſent ſtate in the holy Scriptures. Thus the apoſtle Paul ſays, "Ye ſee your calling, brethren, how that not many wiſe "men after the fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble "are called. But God hath choſen the fooliſh things of "the world, to confound the wiſe; and God hath choſen "the weak things of the world to confound the things "which are mighty, and baſe things of the world, and "things which are deſpiſed hath God choſen, yea, and "things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: "that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence."*a* For the very ſame thing we find our bleſſed Redeemer adoring the depth and ſovereignty of divine Providence, in the following terms, "In that hour Jeſus rejoiced in ſpirit, and "ſaid, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, "that thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and pru-"dent, and haſt revealed them unto babes: even ſo, Fa-"ther, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight."*b*

Miſtakes, however, after all there will be, and ſome differences even among the beſt; but, from this very circumſtance, I derive another great excellence of the above rule laid down, that, it is not only the teſt of truth for a

a 1 Cor. i. 26.—29. *b* Luke x. 21.

man's ſelf, but the meaſure of forbearance with regard to others. By carefully examining their fruits, men may not only be directed what to embrace, and what capital and fundamental errors wholly to reject, but alſo in what particulars to exerciſe mutual forbearance, and, though ſmaller differences ſtill ſubſiſt, to receive one another to the glory of God. If in any perſon or perſons, of whatever party, you perceive the ſpirit of true and undefiled religion, they are accepted of God, and ſhould not be condemned by you. This ought not, in juſtice, to induce you to approve or embrace every one of their principles, or every part of their practice, of which perhaps you have ſeen or felt the bad tendency; yet ſhould it engage you to love them with unfeigned affection as ſincere, though, in ſome meaſure, miſtaken ſervants of our common Lord.

I hope it appears from the preceding obſervations, that this rule, of trying every principle or profeſſion by its fruits, is the beſt that could have been given. It is certain and infallible in itſelf, and we are leſs liable to miſtake in the uſe of it, than of any other. There ſeems, indeed, to be an exact analogy between this rule in religious matters, and reaſon in our common and civil concerns. Reaſon is the beſt guide and director of human life. There is certainly an eſſential difference between wiſdom and folly, in the nature of things. They are alſo ſenſibly oppoſite to one another in their extremes. Innumerable actions, however, there are, or modes of action, of a more doubtful and diſputable nature, as to the wiſdom or weakneſs of which, hardly any two men would be entirely of the ſame opinion. Let the enemy of religion make the application, who denies its reality, becauſe all good men are not of the ſame mind; or becauſe there are different parties and profeſſions, who oppoſe one another in ſome opinions and practices. He acts juſt the ſame part, as he, who ſeeing the differences of judgment among men, upon almoſt every ſubject that falls under their deliberation, ſhould renounce the uſe of reaſon, or deny that there is in nature, any ſuch thing.

We now proceed to the second thing proposed, to show, That the rule above explained and defended, is that by which, in fact, all serious persons, and indeed, mankind in general, so far as they are sincere, do judge of religious principles and pretensions.

By serious persons, I understand all those who are truly religious, in opposition to those who have only a nominal and customary profession. If we would speak with precision, or reason in a just and conclusive manner, we must keep this distinction constantly in view. Nothing does more harm to any cause, than a treacherous friend, or bosom enemy: and nothing does more hurt to the interest of religion, than its being loaded with a great number, who, for many obvious reasons, assume the form, while they are strangers to the power of it. The fallacy of almost all the reasonings of infidels lies here. They consider religion as answerable for all the hypocrisy of those who profess it, and all the wickedness of those who have not renounced the profession; as if in order to its being true, it must be impossible for any to counterfeit it. If that were the case, no thanks would be due to impartial enquiry. All color of objection being taken away, the assent would not be yielded, but compelled. This, doubtless, the presumptuous wisdom of man ordinarily dictates, but according to the superior wisdom of God "offences "must come" and "heresies also, that they that are ap- "proved may be made manifest."

Supposing, therefore, the important distinction between real and nominal Christians, all of the first character, of every age, and of every party, are so far from being under the influence of implicit faith, that they try the truth by its fruits, and adhere to it for its effects. There is something more in the case of every good man, than barely a rational persuasion of the truth of religion in general, from the arguments adduced to support it. The truths of the gospel give him such a view of himself, and his own state, as experience shews him to be true. In the gospel he finds a remedy proposed for his guilt and misery, which, besides all the other evidences of its divine original, is exactly suited to his felt condition. Add to both these, that

he immediately experiences its happy effect, not only in laying the beſt foundation for his peace, but in operating a thorough change in his heart and life. Thus hath every real Chriſtian, an inward and experimental proof of the truth of the goſpel, not contrary, but ſuperior to, ſtronger and more ſtable than any ſpeculative reaſoning. In this ſenſe we are to underſtand the words of the apoſtle John, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witneſs in "himſelf."*a* This is common to all real believers of whatever denomination, who not only are perfectly agreed in the eſſentials of religion, but much more agreed in every thing material, than they themſelves either clearly apprehend, or are willing to confeſs.

So far every good man muſt be acquitted from the charge of implicit faith; we may adopt concerning all ſuch the words of our Saviour to Peter, "Bleſſed art thou, "Simon Barjona: For fleſh and blood hath not revealed "it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."*b*— It is no leſs plain, that in every thing that is ſuppoſed to make a part of, or that hath any connexion with religion, they may judge by the ſame rule. In all theſe modes of opinion in leſſer matters, in all theſe circumſtances which ſerve to diſtinguiſh one ſect from another, though they may determine in different, nay, in oppoſite ways, yet they all proceed upon the ſame general rule, viz. the influence which ſuch diſputed point has, as a means, upon the ſubſtance and end of all religion. This appears from the reaſoning on each ſide, in all religious diſputes. This principle as common to both is often expreſsly mentioned, and always manifeſtly implied that thoſe doctrines, or that way of expreſſing doctrines, and thoſe practices, which are in fact moſt conducive to holineſs, are, and for that very reaſon muſt be, moſt agreeable to the will of God.

But what I have chiefly in view is, to ſhow, that this appears from the very fact uſually brought to prove that the religion of almoſt all mankind is no better than implicit faith. The fact I mean is, that the bulk of mankind is greatly ſwayed in the choice of opinion, by the authority

a 1 John v. 9. *b* Matt. xvi. 17.

and example of others. This, indeed, does not hold ſo generally as is commonly ſuppoſed. We have ſeen above, that it doth not hold, with regard to the ſubſtance of religion, in any good man; for in this he will call no man maſter on earth. But even when it does hold, it is, perhaps, not ſo blameable as many are apt to imagine. Let it be admitted then, that, in many inſtances, it is the authority and example of men, more than any other reaſon that determines the judgment. Let it be admitted, that this is the caſe with the bulk of mankind, and even in ſome meaſure with the beſt. I muſt be allowed to aſk, what is it that procures theſe perſons ſuch authority? What is it that firſt begins, eſtabliſhes, or perpetuates their influence? Nothing elſe, but the real or apparent ſanctity of their character. In vain will a profligate, or one manifeſtly deſtitute of perſonal worth, ſet himſelf at the head of a party, or attempt to draw away diſciples after him. It is the ſuppoſed piety and probity of the perſon, that gives weight to his example, and force to his precepts. This weighs more with the ſober ſerious part of mankind, and, indeed, with mankind in general, than the greateſt intellectual abilities, and otherwiſe moſt admired talents. Whoever has acquired a great reputation for piety and ſincerity, will, with little art, or rather no art at all, nay, without ſo much as intending it, bring his principles and practice into repute. At the ſame time, one of a contrary character, with all the powers of eloquence, and every other outward advantage, ſhall fail in attempting to perſuade.

Now what is this, but that mankind proceed mainly in their judgment, upon the very rule which I have endeavored to ſhow is the beſt they could have choſen. They try principles by their effects, as a tree by its fruits. Wherever they ſee the beſt man, they conclude that he muſt be actuated by the moſt excellent as well as the moſt powerful principles. The multitude, or lower claſs of mankind, are uſually the ſcorn of half-thinkers and ſuperficial reaſoners, for this attachment to perſons. But were a compariſon faithfully made between the ſeveral motives of choice in different claſſes, there would be no great cauſe

of triumph. When we conſider how unfit the plurality of mankind are to judge in an intricate debate, darkened, perhaps, by the art and ſubtilty of thoſe who handle it, we ſhall find they are little, if at all, to blame. In one view, no doubt, they may be ſaid to be actuated by implicit faith, but in truth, and at bottom, they are following the wiſeſt and moſt ſalutary of all moral maxims.

A ſurvey of the hiſtory, either of religion in general, or of the Chriſtian religion in particular, would ſet this matter in the cleareſt light. But little of this kind can come within the limits of a ſingle diſcourſe. I ſhall not therefore ſtay to mention the retired manner of life, and pretended ſanctity of the inventors of the heathen idolatry, though it may be applied to this ſubject; and would ſerve to ſhew the univerſal ſenſe, and general expectation of mankind. There is a ſaying of an eminent and violent enemy of the Chriſtian faith, "That gravity is of the very "eſſence of impoſture." This is nothing elſe but a perverted view, and malicious repreſentation of the general truth, that apparent ſanctity is neceſſary to eſtabliſh any ſacred authority. But is there any thing more unqueſtionable, or that hath been more frequently obſerved, than that the victory of truth over error, in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, was much more owing to the ſhining piety of the primitive Chriſtians in general, together with the patience and conſtancy of the martyrs, than to any other means. Reaſon may convince the underſtanding, but example ſeizes and keeps poſſeſſion of the heart. It was the eminent piety and uſefulneſs of the ſaints in former ages, which attracted ſuch veneration and love from the multitude, as ſoon proceeded to a criminal exceſs. Not content with imitating the amiable example of thoſe whom they held in ſuch eſteem, by a natural aſſociation they affixed a ſanctity to relics, and this produced a variety of ſuperſtitious practices. I cannot alſo help being of opinion, that it was the ſevere and mortified lives of many of the retired devotees in the Romiſh church, that kept that corrupt body in credit for ſome ages longer than it could have otherwiſe continued.

On the other hand, who does not know, that the moſt formidable and ſucceſsful attacks made by the reformers on that mother of abominations, were their expoſing the corrupt and diſſolute lives of her prieſts and members. This they were at no ſmall pains to do, both in a grave and in an ironical ſtrain. As the covetouſneſs and ambition of many, and the licentious debauchery of others of the clergy, firſt brought the doctrines into ſuſpicion, ſo thoſe examples when held up to light, made a far greater number of converts, than any abſurdities in belief, how groſs and palpable ſoever. The truth is, we find all parties greedily lay hold of this weapon whenever it is preſented to them, and uſe it with great confidence againſt their adverſaries; and in ſo doing they diſcover a conviction, that principles are never ſo powerfully ſupported as by the good, nor ſo effectually diſparaged as by the bad characters of thoſe who profeſs them.

If we leave the hiſtory of former ages, and examine the ſtate of the preſent, the ſame truth will ſtill be the reſult of our enquiry, and appear with increaſing evidence. Different parties and denominations prevail in different places: and wherever any party or denomination greatly prevails, the effect may eaſily be traced up to its cauſe; and will appear, by no very diſtant tradition, to have been owing to the eminent piety of ſome one or more of that profeſſion in a former period, or, which is much the ſame, to the comparatively odious and vicious characters of thoſe who oppoſed them.*a*

a Our own country will afford us ſome ſenſible and ſtriking proofs of the juſtice of this obſervation. There had been a ſtruggle, from the very firſt dawn of the reformation, between preſbytery and epiſcopacy in Scotland. This conteſt however came to its greateſt height about 100 years ago, when the preſbyterians were ejected, and epiſcopacy was eſtabliſhed by a tyrannical civil government, and continued by a ſevere and cruel perſecution. We had by this means a trial of both: and it is very obſervable, that the odium which juſtly fell upon epiſcopacy, from the rage and inhumanity of thoſe who had the chief direction, was the circumſtance that determined the body of the nation to endvour its ſubverſion. Yet, wherever there happened to be a few miniſters of that perſuaſion pious in their lives, and diligent in the duties of their office, there were ma-

It is no juſt objection to the account here given, that we find inſtances in which principles ſeem to give a ſanction to characters, inſtead of receiving ſupport from them. There are, no doubt, caſes in which a man's being known to embrace certain principles, will be alone ſufficient to make him odious, however blameleſs, or even praiſe-worthy his conduct be, in every other reſpect. At the ſame time, perhaps, the failings of another ſhall be either wholly pardoned, or greatly extenuated, if he eſpouſe, but eſpecially, if he is active in vindicating the principles which are held ſacred. But this is no more than the natural and neceſſary conſequence of any ſet of principles being once firmly eſtabliſhed. They acquire their credit at firſt, in the way I have already mentioned; but when that credit is high, it will bring a ſuſpicion upon every thing that oppoſes it, however ſpecious and promiſing in outward appearance. There is nothing ſurpriſing here, nor, indeed, any thing but what is perfectly natural; for, as one or a few inſtances commonly do not, ſo in reaſon they ought not to ſhake the reputation of truths, which have been eſtabliſhed by long experience of their worth and efficacy. Neither muſt it be forgotten, that when examples ſeem to ſtand in oppoſition one to another, and to lead to different concluſions, it is not from one or two that a judgment can be paſſed, but from many, and theſe compared and examined with great diligence and care.

ny perſons and families who joined with them in communion, and their poſterity adhere to that opinion even to this day.—This was the caſe in ſome places of the eaſt and north country. But in the weſtern parts of Scotland, where the epiſcopal clergy were, almoſt to a man, ignorant, ſlothful or vicious, they were univerſally deſerted, and hardly a ſingle adherent to that perſuaſion is now to be found.——I cannot omit mentioning here what was ſaid by a lady of quality at that time to Dr. Burnet, when he came to viſit the weſt country. It was to the following purpoſe: "We of the laity cannot judge upon con-"troverſial points, but we ſee theſe men whom you perſecute, "grave in their deportment, ſtrictly holy in their converſation, "and very laborious in their functions, while many of your "clergy are ignorant, ſlothful and vicious." This is what determines the judgment of the people.

I conclude the illuſtration of this head with remarking, that the principle above laid down will explain, in a clear and ſatisfying manner, two appearances in the moral world, which ſeem directly to contradict one another. By what happens ſometimes in religion, we ſhall be apt to conclude, that there is in human nature a proneneſs to change, or a love of novelty purely on its own account. Accordingly we find this laid to the charge of mankind by ſeveral authors. And it cannot be denied, that ſome men, or ſects, often introduce new practices which acquire great reputation, and almoſt univerſal acceptance. By other examples, however, we are taught to aſcribe to human nature a ſtrong attachment to old opinions, and hatred of all innovation. What is remarkable is, that both theſe take place chiefly in little circumſtances, and things of ſmall moment; new inventions being ſometimes gone into with a zeal, and old cuſtoms adhered to with an obſtinacy, which the intrinſic value of the things contended for does not ſeem to merit on either ſide. To aſcribe this to the different diſpoſitions of individuals will not be a ſatisfactory ſolution, for we ſee ſometimes examples of both in the ſame perſons. But, by ſearching a little deeper, we ſhall unravel this difficulty, and diſcover, that though the love of novelty, or a veneration for antiquity, may be ſometimes the immediate principle of action, there is another ultimate principle which is the cauſe of both, and in different circumſtances, produces either the one or the other. This principle is no other than that admiration of real or ſuppoſed worth, which has been illuſtrated above. Whoever hath acquired a great reputation for piety and holineſs, may eaſily introduce any indifferent practice, though not common before, eſpecially if it be conſidered as an evidence or expreſſion of his piety. On this ſuppoſition, his differing from, or doing more than others, will be taken notice of to his praiſe.*a* But he may

a There is great reaſon to think that it was in this very way that many different rites were brought into the Chriſtian church, which in a long courſe of time grew into a maſs of abominable ſuperſtition. They were at firſt, perhaps, but the modes or circumſtances of the worſhip, or practice of pious

much more eaſily introduce a new, than depart from an old cuſtom. The reaſon is plain; for ancient cuſtoms having been eſtabliſhed on the ground already aſſigned, men are uſually very tenacious of them, and it requires no ſmall degree of credit and character, either to change or to aboliſh them.

We now proceed to make ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid.

In the firſt place, from what has been ſaid upon this ſubject, we may derive one of the plaineſt and moſt ſatisfying proofs of the truth of the goſpel. A proof, level to the meaneſt capacity, and therefore proper to preſerve ordinary Chriſtians from being ſhaken by the bold and inſolent attacks now made on religion by ſome of the loweſt rank. A proof, at the ſame time, not only deſerving the attention of the moſt intelligent, but which of all others, is certainly the moſt deciſive. Let us try it by its fruits. Let us compare the temper and character of real Chriſtians, with thoſe of infidels, and ſee which of them beſt merits the approbation of an honeſt and impartial judge. Let us take in every circumſtance that will contribute to make the compariſon juſt and fair, and ſee what will be the reſult. I ſay this, becauſe I can by no means allow, that great multitudes though born in a country where Chriſtianity is profeſſed, ought to be conſidered as Chriſtians, when they are open and violent enemies to the goſpel in all its parts. They ought rather to be thrown into the ſcale of infidelity. But, ſince moſt of them have formed no fixed principles at all, becauſe they have never thought upon the ſubject, we ſhall leave them entirely out of the queſtion.

Is then the character and practice of infidels in general, once to be compared with that of ſuch Chriſtians as believe upon perſonal conviction? However much the natural ſenſe of right and wrong may be obſcured and perverted in ſome, I ſhould think there are very few who

perſons, but from being voluntary and purely circumſtantial, they came by degrees to be conſidered as parts of religious worſhip; and therefore ſinful in the performers, but much more ſinful in the impoſers.

will not manifeſtly perceive to whom the preference is due. In which of the two do you find the moſt regular and fervent piety towards God? Here, perhaps, it will be ſaid, This is what no man expects to find in unbelievers, it is no part of their plan, and therefore ought not to be included in the compariſon. But as the general ſenſe of mankind does not require it, ſo I can never ſuffer that our duty to God ſhould be eraſed out of the moral law. Beſides, the general pretence now, is not atheiſm but theiſm. The queſtion is therefore altogether pertinent; and perſons of this character are ſelf-condemned, who, by their total neglect of all religious worſhip, are as much chargeable with impiety as infidelity.—In which of the two is to be found the greateſt integrity and uprightneſs in their commerce between man and man, the moſt unfeigned good-will, and moſt active beneficence to others? Is it the unbeliever or the Chriſtian, who clothes the naked and deals his bread to the hungry? Aſk the many and noble ancient ſtructures raiſed for the relief of the diſeaſed and the poor, to whom they owe their eſtabliſhment and ſupport?—Which of theſe two claſſes of men are moſt remarkable for ſelf-government? How often is the unexperienced youth initiated in debauchery of all kinds, by theſe very friends of mankind, who charitably declaim againſt prieſtcraft and deluſion, and happily eradicate the prejudices of education, by treating religion and all religious perſons with deriſion and ſcorn? With what fatal ſucceſs has the infidel often ſeduced the unwary virgin unto the deſtructive paths of luſt, by firſt looſening the obligation of religion, and then juſtifying the indulgence of every natural deſire? We ſhall carry the compariſon no further in this place; but I muſt beg of every one who hath had the happineſs to be acquainted with an eminently pious, humble, active, uſeful Chriſtian, to ſay, whether he can admit it as poſſible, under the adminiſtration of a wiſe and good God, that ſuch a perſon is governed by a fable invented by deſigning villains, while the infidel

alone is in poſſeſſion of the truth, which is pure in its nature, and muſt be proved by its fruits.*a*

In the 2d place, ſince not only religion in general, but every particular doctrine of religion ought to be tried by its fruits, let neither miniſters nor people, ever loſe view of this great rule in the doctrines which they teach on the one hand, or embrace on the other. Let us alſo particularly remember, that no credit is to be given to any high profeſſions or bold pretences, but as they are confirmed by the fact. I obſerve here, with much pleaſure, what advantage the fundamental Scripture doctrines, which have been long the glory and happineſs of this church, will derive from a fair and full enquiry into their influence and effects. The doctrines I mean are, the loſt ſtate of man by nature; ſalvation by the free grace of God; juſtification by the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and ſanctification be the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit. Theſe were the doctrines of the reformation, when their excellence was put beyond all doubt or queſtion, by their powerful and valuable effects. Many adverſaries indeed, ſoon roſe up to contradict or to corrupt them; and it is

a I am ſenſible it is often pretended, that ſeveral infidels have been men of unblemiſhed morals. Collins was a good man, ſay ſome, and Shafteſbury was yet a better man. Perhaps, theſe individuals might not be chargeable with the moſt open diſſolution, and groſſeſt ſenſuality, which would have been inconſiſtent with their giving themſelves to cloſe ſtudy and application. Beſides, they who aſſaulted with ſo much boldneſs, eſtabliſhed opinions, muſt have been under a conſiderable reſtraint, from a regard to their character and cauſe. This ought not to be rejected as an improbable ſuppoſition, or uncharitable allegation againſt them, who ſo liberally reproach others, with inſincere, hypocritical, and faint-like pretences. But after all, making even the largeſt allowances, there is one piece of conduct, of which both the above-named perſons were habitually guilty, which it is impoſſible for me to reconcile with good morals, even upon the laxeſt principles that have ever yet been avowed. What I mean was, their ſolemnly receiving the holy ſacrament, to qualify themſelves for bearing office in their country, though they believed it to be altogether impoſture and deceit. This was ſuch a piece of groſs and aggravated diſſimulation, as it is impoſſible either to defend in itſelf, or to ſuppoſe conſiſtent with integrity upon the whole.

much to be lamented that they are, at present, by many, so boldly and so violently opposed in this once happy island. But we may venture to affirm, that when the doctrine of the cross retained its purity and simplicity then was true religion, including every moral virtue, seen to grow from it as its fruit. On the other hand when and wherever it has been run down, and a pretended moral doctrine has been introduced, to the prejudice and subversion of the grace of God, it hath been always followed by a deluge of profaneness and immorality in practice. It is easy and common to disguise the truth by misrepresentation, or to vilify it by opprobrious titles. It is easy to pretend a warm zeal for the great doctrines of morality, and frequently to repeat, in a pulpit, the necessity of holiness in general; but all impartial persons ought, and the world in general will judge, more by works than by words. Let us suppose, for example, the old objection revived against a minister who preaches the doctrine of grace, that it loosens the obligations to holiness of life. The objection is, of all others, the most specious: yet, if that minister discharges his duty with zeal and diligence, watches over his people's souls, reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all long suffering and doctrine; is strict and holy in his own conversation, abhorring and flying from the society of the ungodly; and if the effect of his ministry be to turn many sinners from the error of their ways, and to make an intelligent, serious, regular people, the accusation will not be received: and who will say that it ought? On the other hand, is any minister more covetous of the fleece, than diligent for the welfare of the flock; cold and heartless in his sacred work, but loud and noisy in promiscuous and foolish conversation; careless or partial in the exercise of discipline; covering or palliating the sins of the great, because they may promote him; making friends and companions of profane persons; though this man's zeal should burn like a flame against Antinomianism, and though his own unvaried strain should be the necessity of holiness, I would never take him to be any of its real friends.

Let us not, my brethern, deceive ourselves, or attempt to deceive others by plausible pretences. Let us all be

zealous for good works; not the name, but the thing. Let us not expect to promote them by a little cold reasoning, or affected flowery declamation; but by the simplicity of the gospel; by the doctrine of the cross, which will not only tell men that they ought to be holy, but effectually bring them to that happy state. The leading principle of true holiness, according to the gospel, is a deep and grateful sense of redeeming love. "For the love of Christ "constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died "for all then were all dead; and that he died for all, that "they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose "again."*a*

In the 3d place, from what has been said on this subject you may see, in a very strong light, how necessary it is, that ministers should be, not only really but visibly and eminently holy; and with how much care they are bound to avoid every appearance of evil. There are some ministers who strongly plead for liberty and freedom, and loudly complain of the malice, uncharitableness, and censoriousness of the world. They seem as if they desired, nay, which is still more foolish, expected, that no part of their conduct should be attended to, or any inference drawn from it with respect to their character. This will never be the case till they are invisible. It appears, from what hath been said in the preceding discourse, that it is the right and the duty of every man to try a minister by his fruits. Ignorance indeed, may sometimes be guilty of mistakes to our prejudice, and malice or envy may go too far; yet this is only what we ought to lay our account with, and it should excite us, not to a contempt of the judgment of others, but to greater strictness and circumspection, that "they may be ashamed who falsely accuse "our good conversation in Christ."

It is very hurtful in this as in many other cases, when a man views things only on one side. Some are apt to impute so much to the malice and uncharitableness of the world, that they seldom or never think themselves truly guilty of any offence or miscarriage. I am persuaded ma-

a 2 Cor. v. 14.

ny are in a manner blinded to the errors of their own conduct, by this very circumstance. Or, if they cannot but be sensible that they have been guilty of something that was wrong, when the fault is aggravated by report, they seem to think that this atones for any thing really blameworthy, and so are hardened both against confession and repentance. To speak without prejudice, it is more than probable, that we are as much chargeable with unguarded and offensive conduct, on the one hand, as the world with precipitate or partial judgment on the other. It hath been sometimes observed, that the multitude or common people are but poor judges of a man's ability or learning, but they are very good judges of his life. There is a great deal of truth in this observation; and to support it I add, that even a hypocritical pretence is extremely hard to maintain, and so often betrays itself by little circumstances, that there are very few whose real character is not better understood by the world than by themselves. The chief exception I know to this is the case of violent party disputes. The injustice done to characters on each side there, is very great. If you take a man's character from one to whom he stands in party opposition, you must conceive him not a man but a monster. But (letting this aside, which does not fall within the compass of our present subject) in general, it is surely much more becoming, and it is infinitely more safe for us to suspect ourselves, than to complain of hard measure from the world. Let us therefore, by doubling our diligence in every personal and ministerial duty, endeavor to "make our light so shine before men, "that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father "which is in heaven."*a*

In the 4th place I must now take the liberty, in fidelity to the trust committed to me, to be a little more particular in the application of this subject, and to enquire, whether ministers are not, in a good measure, chargeable with the low state to which religion is at present reduced. May I not say without offence, that an eminent, holy, diligent, and successful gospel ministry was once the glory and blessing of this part of the united kingdom! But how

a Matt. v. 16.

are we ſince fallen aſleep! "How is the gold become "dim! How is the moſt fine gold changed! That there is a difference is plain; and that this difference does not lie in inferior abilities or a leſs proportion of learning, is equally certain. I am ſenſible, that this is a part of my ſubject which would require to be touched with a very tender and delicate hand, and that, perhaps, I run as great a hazard to inflame and exaſperate the ſore, as to bring any effectual cure. This is, indeed, itſelf, one ſtrong ſymptom of our diſeaſe, that we cannot endure plain dealing; and there is not a ſingle circumſtance, in which there is a greater difference between this and the preceding age. What in former times would have been reckoned (to ſpeak in their language) no more than plainneſs and miniſterial freedom, would now be called the moſt ſlanderous invective and unpardonable abuſe. Inſtead, therefore, of taking upon me to ſay who are chiefly to be blamed as the criminal cauſes of it, I ſhall only affirm and lament the melancholy effect, that we have in many places of this church a deſpiſed, forſaken, uſeleſs miniſtry; that many of the people have gone from mountain to mountain, and forgotten their reſting place, while a ſtill greater number is faſt aſleep in ignorance, ſecurity, and ſloth. Where is that union, that mutual eſteem and affection, which once ſubſiſted between miniſters and their people. It muſt be acknowledged, that their influence and authority is now in a great meaſure loſt, and therefore I may ſafely conclude that their uſefulneſs is gone. That the fault is all on one ſide, is neither a modeſt nor a probable ſuppoſition. Should we throw the blame off ourſelves, what a terrible load muſt we thereby lay upon others? we muſt ſuppoſe and ſay, that under a blameleſs miniſtry, under the beſt and pureſt of inſtruction, one part of the nation is ſunk in brutality and ſloth, and the other rent in pieces by diviſion, and religion loſt in the fury of contending parties.

We may ſay ſo, my brethren, and ſome do ſay what amounts to the ſame thing, but it is not credible. I do therefore, in the moſt earneſt manner beſeech every miniſter in this audience, ſeriouſly to think, how far he hath given juſt cauſe to his people to deſpiſe his perſon, or de-

ſert his miniſtrations. Let us not ſo inſiſt upon the ignorance, prejudices, and weakneſs of the giddy multitude, as if a failure on our part was impoſſible. We may be ſometimes blamed in the wrong place; but we have, perhaps, as much reſpect in general, as we really deſerve. Do not think it is ſufficient that you are free from groſs crimes, ſuch as blaſphemy, riot, and unclean luſt. Bleſſed be God, nothing of this kind would yet be ſuffered among us without cenſure. But there are many other things, which, either ſeparately or together, render a miniſter juſtly contemptible, on which no law, either civil or eccleſiaſtic can lay hold. If one ſet apart to the ſervice of Chriſt in the goſpel, manifeſtly ſhows his duty to be a burden, and does no more work than is barely ſufficient to ſcreen him from cenſure; if he reckons it a piece of improvement how ſeldom or how ſhort he can preach, and makes his boaſt how many omiſſions he has brought a patient and an injured people to endure without complaint; while at the ſame time, he cannot ſpeak with temper of thoſe who are willing to do more than himſelf; however impoſſible it may be to aſcertain his faults by a libel, he juſtly merits the deteſtation of every faithful miniſter, and every real Chriſtian.

The things here in view, though they are eaſily ſeen, are difficult to deſcribe; and, therefore, I ſhall not attempt to be more particular. But I cannot forbear warning you againſt, and pointing out the evil of two pieces of diſhoneſty, which may poſſibly be found united to gravity and decency in other reſpects. One of them is common in our neighbor kingdom, and may poſſibly have taken place among us, though I cannot affirm it. The other, I am certain, hath many times taken place in the church of Scotland. The firſt is a miniſter's ſubſcribing articles of doctrine, which he does not believe. This is ſo direct a violation of ſincerity, that it is aſtoniſhing to think, how men can ſet their minds at eaſe in the proſpect, or keep them in peace after the deliberate commiſſion of it. The very excuſes and evaſions, that are offered in defence of it, are a diſgrace to reaſon as well as a ſcandal to religion. What ſucceſs can be expected from that man's miniſtry,

who begins it with an act of such complicated guilt. How can he take upon him to reprove others for sin, or to train them up in virtue and true goodness, while himself is chargeable with direct, premeditated, and perpetual perjury. I know nothing so nearly resembling it, as those cases in trade, in which men make false entries, and at once screen and aggravate their fraud, by swearing, or causing others to swear contrary to truth. This is justly reputed scandalous even in the world, and yet I know no circumstance in which they differ, that does not tend to show it to be less criminal than the other. We are not yet so much hardened in this sin as many in our neighbor church, for I have never found any among us so bold as to profess and defend it. But, if no such thing is at all admitted among us, Why is there so heavy a suspicion of it? Why do so many complain, that the great and operative doctrines of the gospel are withdrawn, and an unsubstantial theory of virtue substituted in their place? Or why are not such complaints put to silence, since it may be so easily done? Appearances are certainly such as will warrant me in mentioning it upon this occasion: and I have particularly chosen to introduce it upon this subject, that I may attack it not as an error, but as a fraud; not as a mistake in judgment, but an instance of gross dishonesty and insincerity of heart. Supposing, therefore, that there may possibly be truth in the charge against some of us, I must beg every minister, but especially those young persons who have an eye to that sacred office to remember, that God will not be mocked, though the world may be deceived. In his sight, no gravity of deportment, no pretence to freedom of enquiry, a thing excellent it itself, no regular exercise of the right of private judgment, will warrant or excuse such a lie for gain, as solemnly to subscribe what they do not believe.

The other particular I proposed to mention is the solemn attestation of men's characters, not only in general, but for particular qualities, without any satisfying knowledge whether the thing affirmed is true or false. This hath been often done in the church of Scotland, not by particular persons, with whom we might renounce relati-

on, but by consent of many, gravely and deliberately in constituted courts. Can we avoid making the following obvious but melancholy reflection. How great is the blindness of men to those sins which are introduced by degrees and countenanced by prevailing fashion? Should we be told by an historian of credit, that, in one of the dark and corrupt ages of popery, it was common for a body of ministers, when desired, to give a signed attestation to particular persons, that they were strict observers of the sabbath, and worshipped God regularly in their families, while the persons attesting knew nothing of the matter, and, in fact, with regard to some of them, it was absolutely false—Would there be a dissenting voice in affirming, that such men must have been lost to all sense of integrity, and utterly unworthy of regard? What shall we say, if the same thing is done among us every day, and defended by no better argument than the judgment of charity, which believeth all things? Charity teaches us to believe no ill of another without satisfying evidence, and forbids us to spread it, although it be true, without apparent necessity. But will charity either justify or excuse us, in solemnly affirming a positive fact, the existence of which is uncertain in itself, and to us unknown. I do not take upon me to say that all are bad men who are guilty, by act or consent, of this practice, because I do not know how far the plea of ignorance or mistake may go; but this may be safely said that they do in a public capacity, what, if they were to do in a private capacity between man and man, would render them contemptible, or infamous, or both.

These two particulars have often brought reproach upon the church of Scotland, to which it is very difficult to make a proper reply. Would to God the occasion given for it were wholly taken away. In the mean time, every one who has a just regard to the glory of God, or the success of his own work, will endeavour to maintain such an uniformity of character, as will bear that examination, to which it ought in justice, and must of necessity be exposed.

In the laſt place, I muſt beg leave to ſpeak a few words to the people in general, on the ſubject of this diſcourſe. You may learn, my brethren, from the preceding diſcourſe, by what rule you ought to judge, in all religious controverſies, where a determination is neceſſary. Try all principles by their effects, and every perſon's pretences by his conduct. Examime, as far as you have proper evidence, who have real and vital religion moſt at heart, and what means do effectually promote it. Believe not every profeſſion, but ſee which is moſt conſiſtent in all its parts. Have patience, in difficult caſes, till the tree have time to bring its fruits to maturity. Time will often write a clear and legible character, on what was very dark and dubious at firſt.

It is probable ſome will be ready to ſay, there is no ſmall doubtfulneſs in this rule itſelf. There may be found good men of many different parties, how then ſhall we judge between them? I anſwer, wherever there is true religion, theſe perſons are to be conſidered as the ſervants of God, and his grace in them is to be confeſſed without reluctance, and adored with thankfulneſs. There will, nevertheleſs, be ſtill ſufficient means to diſtinguiſh between one profeſſion and another, which hath the greateſt influence in making men truly good. There may be, here and there, a good man under very great diſadvantages. This may ſerve to keep us from a bigotted narrowneſs of mind, and uncharitable condemnation of others. But it will never occaſion, in any prudent perſon, a departure from theſe principles, and that diſpenſation of ordinances, which he ſees to be beſt for building him up in holineſs and comfort, through faith unto ſalvation. The truth is, one great deſign of this diſcourſe was to teach men to diſtinguiſh between the upright and the worthleſs of all ſects. Turn your zeal from parties to perſons. Do not reproach or oppoſe men merely becauſe they are of this or the other perſuaſion. But wherever there is a wicked or a worldly man in the office of a miniſter, avoid the wolf in ſheep's clothing for your own ſake, and, if poſſible, drag off his diſguiſe, that others may not be his prey. What doth it ſignify what party a man is of, if the foundations are de-

ſtroyed, and truth and holineſs, theſe inſeparable companions, are trampled under foot? When ſhall the time come, when the ſincere lovers of Chriſt, of every denomination, ſhall join together in oppoſition to his open enemies and treacherous friends? There is a wonderful, though a natural union, among all worldly men, againſt the ſpirit and power of true religion wherever it appears. I am ſorry to add, that this is one of the inſtances in which the children of this world are wiſer in their generation than the children of light. Many will not meet together on earth for the worſhip of God, who ſhall have but one temple at laſt, where all from the eaſt and from the weſt, from the north and from the ſouth, ſhall meet, and join in their Creator's and Redeemer's praiſe. The terms of admiſſion into, and of excluſion from this happy dwelling, are recorded in the following remarkable terms, with which I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe, as indeed they are the ſum of all that has been ſaid in it, "And there ſhall in no wiſe enter "into it any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever work-"eth abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are "written in the Lamb's book of life."*a*

a Rev. xxi. 27.

The CHARGE of SEDITION and FACTION againſt good MEN, eſpecially faithful MINISTERS, conſidered and accounted for.

SERMON 39.

Preached in the Abbey Church of Paiſley, on Thurſday, September 7th, 1758, at the Ordination of Mr. ARCHIBALD DAVIDSON, as one of the Miniſters of that Church. To which is ſubjoined, the charge to the Miniſter, and the Exhortation to the People. Publiſhed at the deſire of thoſe who heard it.

ACTS xvii. 6. laſt clauſe.

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.

MY BRETHREN,

YOU have had, of late, frequent opportunities of hearing diſcourſes on the miniſterial character and office. Theſe ſubjects, indeed, have, on occaſions of this and a ſimilar nature, been ſo often and ſo well handled, that it is hard to ſay any thing on them, which ſhall not be either bare repetition, or an alteration very much for the worſe. I have therefore made choice at this time of a ſubject ſomewhat different, but the uſefulneſs of which, both to miniſters and people may be eaſily diſcerned.

A great part of the ſacred volume conſiſts of hiſtory. And, as the knowledge of paſt events, and the hiſtory of mankind in general, is an improving ſtudy; ſo there is

no object of ſtudy more pleaſant or more profitable, than that extenſive view of the great plan of Providence which is exhibited to us in the word of God. There we have acceſs to obſerve the power, the wiſdom, and the grace of the various revelations of the divine will, given in ſucceſſive ages, their correſpondence one to another, and how well each is ſuited to the ſeaſon, and other circumſtances of its diſcovery. Above all, it is uſeful and delightful to obſerve, the perfect union and harmony of the whole, and the ſeveral ſtriking and diſtinguiſhing characters that are to be found on all the works of the one, eternal and unchangeable God.

This uniformity is in nothing more remarkable, than in the ſufferings of good men, and their cauſes. True religion being the ſame in ſubſtance in every age, we may expect to find a very ſtrong likeneſs in all the real ſervants of God, however diſtant the periods in which they make their appearance. A conformity of ſtate alſo may be expected, as well as a ſimilarity of character. They have the ſame end in view, they tread in the ſame path, and therefore muſt meet with reſiſtance from the ſame enemies. There was from the beginning, and there will be to the end of the world, a ſtrife and conflict between the righteous and the wicked, between "the ſeed of the "woman, and the ſeed of the ſerpent." And, in particular, it is natural to ſuppoſe, that ſlander and calumny will be always one of the weapons uſed by the enemies of the truth. We have no reaſon then to be ſurpriſed, that every good man ſhould have occaſion to ſay with the Pſalmiſt David, and with a greater than he, the Son of David, "They laid to my charge things that I knew not."

This was the caſe with the apoſtle Paul and his companion, in the paſſage of hiſtory of which my text is a part. But the nature of the accuſation here brought againſt them ſeems to be ſingular, and to merit particular attention. They were the ſervants and the miniſters of the Prince of peace. Their office was to preach and publiſh the goſpel of peace. Their doctrine was full of meekneſs and love. They diſcovered the love of God to men; and, after the example of their maſter, they charged men to

love one another. They were mean in their outward appearance, and neither poſſeſſed, nor claimed any earthly dominion. In one word, they had nothing about them that one would think could give jealouſy to the civil power, that could ſeem formidable or dangerous to any character or claſs of men. Yet here they are charged as ſeditious, as diſturbers to the public peace, as enemies to the government. "Theſe that have turned the world upſide "down are come hither alſo.—Theſe all do contrary to the "decrees of Cæſar, ſaying, That there is another king, "one Jeſus." What ſort of an accuſation is this? not only falſe but improbable. Does not the arch-enemy, the accuſer of the brethren, ſeem to have failed in his uſual ſkill? Is there the leaſt proſpect of ſucceſs in ſo groundleſs a charge?

But what ſhall we ſay, if, upon an accurate examination it be found, that the ſame charge hath been brought againſt the ſervants of God in every age? That none hath been advanced with greater boldneſs, and none with greater ſucceſs? Nay, perhaps, that it is the ſingle ſtanding charge, from which their enemies have never departed ſince the beginning of the world, and which, of all others, hath been moſt readily and moſt univerſally believed. In other inſtances, the reproaches thrown upon the children of God have been oppoſite, and mutually deſtructive of each other. Chriſt himſelf, when his zeal in his Father's buſineſs made him forget to eat bread, was ſaid to be beſide himſelf, and mad. At other times he was called a cunning deceiver and maſter of the curious arts. But in this, his enemies, and thoſe of his people, have never varied. And their ſucceſs has been equal to their malice. They crucified him as an enemy to Cæſar, with the title of uſurpation written over him; and they have compelled all his diſciples after him, to bear his croſs, and to groan under the weight of the ſame unjuſt and ſlanderous charge.

There are few ſubjects more worthy of the ſerious attention of thoſe who firmly believe the word of God. None which will afford greater occaſion to adore the myſterious depth of divine Providence, or furniſh more inſtructive leſſons to ſuch as deſire to hold on with ſteadineſs in the

paths of true religion. Above all, this ſubject may be uſeful to miniſters of the goſpel. It will contribute to aſcertain the character which they ought to bear; to direct them in their duty; to prepare them for, and fortify them againſt the trials which it is impoſſible they can avoid.

In diſcourſing further upon this ſubject it is propoſed, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace,

I. By a ſhort hiſtorical deduction, chiefly from the holy Scriptures, to ſhew, That the character of ſeditious, troubleſome, and diſorderly, hath been conſtantly given by wicked men to the ſervants of God.

II. To enquire, and endeavor to point out, what it is in true religion that gives occaſion to this charge, and makes the world prone to believe it.

In the laſt place, To make ſome practical improvement of what may be ſaid.

I return to the firſt of theſe, viz.

I. By a ſhort hiſtorical deduction, to ſhew, That the character of ſeditious, troubleſome, and diſorderly, hath been conſtantly given by wicked men to the ſervants of God.—It would not be difficult to point out ſomething of this ſpirit prevailing in the world, from the life of almoſt every good man, whoſe name ſtands upon record, however ſhort and general the account be, that is given of many of them in Scripture. But, as much of what might properly enough fall under this head, will be neceſſary in the illuſtration of the ſecond; to prevent confuſion and repetition, I ſhall content myſelf with ſome leading inſtances, in very different ages, from the earlieſt to the lateſt times.

The firſt I ſhall mention is, a paſſage as extraordinary in its nature, and as ſingular in its circumſtances, as any that hiſtory affords. It is the meeting of Ahab and Elijah, in the time of a great famine in the land of Iſrael. Ahab, that profane prince, had by his apoſtacy and idolatry, brought down the judgment of a righteous God, both on

his kingdom and on his houſe. We are told, "That he "did more to provoke the Lord God of Iſrael to anger, "than all the kings of Iſrael that were before him."*a* He had perſecuted the worſhippers of the true God with unrelenting violence; and, as it was natural to expect, he hated with uncommon rancor, and diſtinguiſhed by uncommon ſeverity, all the prophets who continued ſtedfaſt in the cauſe of truth. As many of them as he could lay hold of, he had put to death. He had hunted for Elijah, not only through all the kingdom of Iſrael, but through the neighboring nations, as we find related by Obadiah his principal ſervant, "As the Lord thy God "liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord "hath not ſent to ſeek thee: and when they ſaid, He "is not there: he took an oath of the kingdom and na"tion that they found thee not."*b* After all this ſeverity on his part, when Elijah, by the command of God went out to meet him, ſee the form of his ſalutation; "And "it came to paſs, when Ahab ſaw Elijah, that Ahab ſaid "unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Iſrael?"*c* To this the prophet makes the following ſtrong and juſt reply, "I have not troubled Iſrael; but thou and thy father's "houſe, have troubled Iſrael, in that thou haſt forſaken the "commandments of the Lord; and thou haſt followed "Baalim."

Another inſtance ſimilar to the former may be found in Jehoſhaphat and Ahab's conſultation before going out to battle. "And Jehoſhaphat ſaid, Is there not here a pro"phet of the Lord beſides, that we may enquire of him? "And the king of Iſrael ſaid unto Jehoſhaphat, There is "yet one man (Micaiah the ſon of Imlah) by whom we "may enquire of the Lord; but I hate him, for he doth "not propheſy good concerning me, but evil."*d* Here, you ſee, Micaiah was the object of hatred and averſion, becauſe he denounced the judgment of God againſt the king's wickedneſs. That vengeance which he himſelf not only merited, but ſolicited by his crimes, was attributed to malice in the prophet.

a 1 Kings xvi. 33. *b* 1 Kings xviii. 10. *c* Ibid. ver. 17.
d 1 Kings xxii. 7, 8.

See an inſtance of a general accuſation of this kind againſt all the worſhippers of the true God, by Haman in the book of Eſther. "And Haman ſaid unto king Aha-"ſuerus, There is a certain people ſcattered abroad, and "diſperſed among the people in all the provinces of thy "kingdom, and their laws are diverſe from all people, nei-"ther keep they the king's laws; therefore it is not for "the king's profit to ſuffer them."*a*

The prophet Jeremiah met with the ſame treatment at different times. Neither prince, nor prieſts, nor prophets, were able to bear without reſentment, the threatenings which he denounced in the name of God. "Now it came "to paſs, when Jeremiah had made an end of ſpeaking "all that the Lord had commanded him to ſpeak unto all "the people, that the prieſts and the prophets, and all the "people took him, ſaying, Thou ſhalt ſurely die. Why "haſt thou propheſied in the name of the Lord, ſaying, "This houſe ſhall be like Shiloh, and this city ſhall be de-"ſolate without an inhabitant, and all the people were "gathered againſt Jeremiah in the houſe of the Lord.*b*— "Then ſpake the prieſts and the prophets unto the prin-"ces and to all the people, ſaying, This man is worthy to "die, for he hath propheſied againſt this city, as you have "heard with your ears."*c* We find him afterwards expreſsly accuſed of treachery on the ſame account. "And "when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the "ward was there, whoſe name was Irijah, the ſon of She-"lemiah, the ſon of Hananiah, and he took Jeremiah the "prophet, ſaying, Thou falleſt away to the Chaldeans."*d*

The prophet Amos is another inſtance, preciſely parallel to the laſt. Becauſe of his fidelity to God, he was invidiouſly repreſented as an enemy to the king. "Then "Amaziah the prieſt of Beth-el ſent to Jeroboam king of "Iſrael, ſaying, Amos hath conſpired againſt thee in the "midſt of the houſe of Iſrael: the land is not able to bear "all his words."*e*

Our bleſſed Lord and Saviour fell under the ſame accuſation. However plain and artleſs his carriage, he is call-

a Eſther iii. 8. *b* Jer. xxvi. 8, 9. *c* Ibid. ver. 11.
d Jer. xxxvii. 13. See alſo chap. xxxviii. 4. *e* Amos vii. 10.

ed a deceiver of the people. " There was much murmur-
" ing among the people concerning him, for ſome ſaid,
" he is a good man: others ſaid, Nay, but he deceiveth
" the people."*a* His enemies endeavored to embroil him with the civil government by this inſidious queſtion, " Is
" it lawful to give tribute to Cæſar, or not?" And that which brought him at laſt to the croſs was the ſame pretended crime. " And from thenceforth Pilate ſought to
" releaſe him: but the Jews cried out, ſaying, If thou let
" this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend: whoſoever
" maketh himſelf a king, ſpeaketh againſt Cæſar."*b*

I ſhall cloſe this view of the Scripture hiſtory, with the paſſage of which my text is a part. The whole crime of the apoſtle Paul, and his companion, was preaching the doctrine of the croſs of Chriſt, his great and darling theme. We are told, he " opened" and " alledged, that Chriſt muſt
" needs have ſuffered, and riſen again from the dead." Then the Jews, to whom this doctrine always was a ſtumbling-block, were " moved with envy," and endeavored to inflame the reſentment of the idolatrous multitude: they took for their aſſociates the moſt wicked and profligate, " Certain lewd fellows of the baſer ſort:" They " ſet all
" the city in an uproar:" And as, no doubt, the friends of Paul and Silas would endeavor to protect them from the injurious aſſault, their enemies very gravely charge them as the authors of the confuſion, both there and elſewhere. " They that have turned the world upſide down,
" are come hither alſo."

Having produced theſe inſtances from the holy Scriptures, which are liable to no exception, I ſhall ſay but little on the ſubſequent periods of the church. Only in general, the ſame ſpirit will be found to have prevailed in every age. Whoever will take the pains to look into the hiſtory of the church before the reformation, cannot fail to obſerve, that when any one, either among the clergy or laity, was bold enough to reprove the errors in doctrine, or the ambition, luxury, and worldly lives of his cotemporaries, he was immediately branded as a factious and

a John vii. 12. *b* John xix. 12.

diſorderly perſon, and often ſeverely puniſhed as an enemy to the peace of the church.

That this was the caſe with the firſt reformers, both at home and abroad, is too well known to need any proof. And we have had ſtill more recent examples of it in both parts of the united kingdom. The noble ſtruggle which many in England made, about an hundred years ago, for their liberties ſacred and civil, ſtill bears the name of the grand rebellion. And it is remarkable, that, however juſt a title they had to ſtand up for their rights as men and Chriſtians, yet their doing ſo at that time, was in a great meaſure owing to the fury and violence of their enemies, who were, in every reſpect, the aggreſſors. A very judicious hiſtorian ſays on this ſubject, "That which, upon "the whole, was the great cauſe of the parliament's "ſtrength and the king's ruin, was, that the debauched "rabble through the land, took all that were called Puri-"tans for their enemies; ſo that if a man did but pray in "his family, or were but heard repeat a ſermon, or ſing a "pſalm, they preſently cried out, Rebels, roundheads, and "all their money and goods that were portable, proved "guilty, how innocent ſoever they were themſelves. This "it was that filled the armies and garriſons of the parlia-"ment with ſober pious men. Thouſands had no mind "to meddle with the wars, but greatly deſired to live peace-"ably at home, when the rage of ſoldiers and drunkards "would not ſuffer them."*a*

And in Scotland, after the reſtoration, though there was no ſtruggle for civil liberty, all who choſe to obey God rather than man, either in the ſubſtance or circumſtances of religious duties, were charged with treaſon, and ſuffered as rebels. They were expelled from the church; yet cenſured as ſchiſmatics. They were harraſſed, fined and impriſoned, when living in peace, without any fault but "concerning the law of their God;" and yet complained of as troubleſome. They were baniſhed, excommunicated, and denied the common benefits of life; and yet, when the extreme rigor of their oppreſſors compelled them to take up arms in ſelf-defence, they were condemn-

a Calamy's Life of Baxter, Chap. IV.

ed in form of law for reſiſting that government which had denied them its protection.

I forbear to add any more particular examples; but from the deduction above given, it will plainly appear, that worldly men have been always diſpoſed, firſt to oppreſs the children of God, and then to complain of injury from them, that by ſlander they might vindicate their oppreſſion. Their ſlander too, hath ſtill run in the ſame ſtrain; troublers of Iſrael, deceivers of the people, enemies to Cæſar, and turners of the world upſide down, have been the opprobrious titles generally given to the moſt upright and moſt faithful men, in every age and country.

We proceed now,

II. In the ſecond place, To enquire, what it is in true religion that gives occaſion to this charge, and makes the world prone to believe it.

That there muſt be ſomething of this kind is very evident. So uniform an effect, could not take place without an adequate cauſe. And, to a ſerious and attentive obſerver, I am perſuaded it is not difficult to diſcern. The general cauſe of this effect is, that, in an equivocal ſenſe, the charge is juſt. True religion does, indeed, give trouble and uneaſineſs to wicked men, while they continue ſuch; and it cannot be ſuppoſed, but they will deeply reſent it. In order to illuſtrate this a little more fully, I beg your attention to the three following obſervations.

1. The example of the ſervants of God, is a continual and ſenſible reproach, to the contrary conduct of the men of the world. Nothing can preſerve peace to any man, but ſome meaſure of ſelf-ſatisfaction. As a deceived heart turns the wicked aſide, ſo the continuance of ſelf-deceit is neceſſary to his taſting thoſe pleaſures of ſin in which his miſtaken happineſs is placed. To reproach his conduct, therefore, is to diſturb his dream, and to wound his peace. And as pride, however finely diſguiſed, has the dominion in every unrenewed heart, how offenſive muſt every ſpecies of reproof be, to men of this character? Now, is not the example of every good man, a ſevere and ſenſible, though ſilent, reproof to the wicked? With whatever

ſpecious arguments men may ſometimes plead for ſin, with whatever falſe pretences they may often excuſe and palliate it to their own minds, when it is brought into one view with true religion, it is not able to bear the compariſon. The example of good men to the wicked is, like the ſun upon a weak eye, diſtreſſing and painful. It is excellent in itſelf, but it is offenſive to them. If I may ſpeak ſo, it flaſhes light upon the conſcience, rouſes it from a ſtate of inſenſible ſecurity, points its arrows, and ſharpens its ſting. What elſe was it that produced the firſt act of violence that ſtands upon record, the murder of Abel by his brother Cain? Of this the apoſtle John ſpeaks in the following terms, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, "and ſlew his brother: and wherefore, ſlew he him? "Becauſe his own works were evil, and his brother's "righteous."

And, as every worldly man's own conſcience is thus made troubleſome to him by the example of the children of God: ſo it tends to ſet ſinners at variance with one another, and expoſes the conduct of each to the cenſure of the reſt. Sin, however univerſally practiſed, is yet generally ſhameful. Conſcience though bribed, and comparatively blind in a man's own caſe, is often juſt and impartial, at leaſt under far leſs bias, in the caſe of others. It is in this way, and in this way alone, that the public honor and credit of religion is preſerved, amidſt ſo great a majority who are enemies to it in their hearts. Muſt not then, the example of a ſtrict and conſcientious perſon, ſet in the ſtrongeſt light the faults of thoſe who act a contrary part, ſo often as they happen to fall under obſervation together. Nay, does it not open the eyes of the world upon many leſſer blemiſhes which would otherways eſcape its notice? The degree of ſhame that attends any practice, is always in proportion to the ſenſe which the bulk of mankind have of the evil of it. And this ſenſe cannot, by any means, be more ſtrengthened, than by an example of what is good; as deformity never appears ſo ſhocking as when compared with perfect beauty. Thus, a truly pious man is, by every inſtance of his viſible conduct, expoſing to

reproach ſome one or other, and by conſequence provoking their reſentment.

It is for this reaſon that men diſcover ſuch a proneneſs to diſparage every profeſſion of piety ſuperior to their own. How common is it to aſcribe every ſuch appearance to weakneſs or hypocriſy. In the generality of wicked men this is not ſo properly malice as ſelf-defence. If they ſhould allow the excellence of ſuch a character, it would be condemning themſelves out of their own mouths. Their inward reflection, in all probability, is perfectly ſimilar to that of the Phariſees, when Chriſt aſked them, Whether the baptiſm of John was from heaven, or of men? "They reaſoned with themſelves, ſaying, If we ſhall ſay "from heaven, he will ſay unto us, Why did ye not then "believe him?" In the ſame manner, ſhould any confeſs the excellence of a conduct oppoſite to their own, it would be impoſſible to avoid ſaying to them, Why do ye then ſo ſin againſt light?

Every one will ſee, that this muſt neceſſarily hold moſt ſtrongly in the caſe of thoſe whoſe office, or whoſe work, is of a public nature. They are like a city ſet on an hill. As their character is moſt conſpicuous, it is, by neceſſary conſequence, moſt uſeful to the good, and moſt provoking to the wicked. Faithful miniſters of Chriſt, for inſtance, are the lights of the world, and, by their piety and diligence, are a ſtanding reproach to the world lying in wickedneſs. But, in a particular manner, they muſt be the objects of the hatred and reſentment of thoſe of their own order, who will not follow their ſteps. This is an evident conſequence of the principle above laid down. As their character ſuffers moſt by the compariſon, their paſſions muſt neceſſarily be moſt inflamed. Let a miniſter of Chriſt be ever ſo guarded in his ſpeech, ever ſo inoffenſive in his carriage, ever ſo diſtant in reality from injuring others; if he is more frequent or more affectionate in preaching, if he is more aſſiduous in the duties of his function, this muſt naturally excite the reſentment of the lazy, ſlothful part of his profeſſion. This of itſelf, is injury enough to thoſe who love their worldly eaſe, and have more pleaſure in the poſſeſſion of their benefice, than the

exercise of their office. Is this surprising? Not in the least. His conduct does indeed molest their quiet: it either forces them to greater diligence, or holds up their real character to light, and exposes them to contempt and scorn.

In order at once to confirm and illustrate this truth, be pleased, my brethren, to observe, that the force and malignity of envy in defaming of characters, is always in proportion to the nearness of the person to whom the character belongs. Distance, either of time or place, greatly abates, if not wholly extinguishes it. Suppose the character of a person drawn, who lived many ages ago, or even at present in a very distant country; suppose him represented as eminent in virtue of every kind, as remarkably diligent, as indefatigably active in doing good; there are few who shew any disposition to call in question the fact, or impute it to sinister motives. But let the same be the apparent character of any man among his cotemporaries, and how many are immediately up in arms against him? How implicitly do they believe, and with what pleasure do they spread every idle calumny to his prejudice? How is his piety immediately converted into hypocrisy, his zeal into faction and ill nature, his fervor and diligence into affectation and love of popularity; and, in a word, every valuable quality into that vice, by which it is most commonly or most artfully counterfeited.

That this difference of judgment is entirely owing to the reason I have assigned, will further appear, if you consider, that so soon as a connexion of the same nature happens, by any accidental circumstance to be established, the same invidious resentment immediately takes place against the most distant characters. What inveterate prejudice do infidels generally show, against the characters of the Scripture saints, and those of the fathers of the Christian church, because the establishment of such characters does necessarily and manifestly infer the overthrow of the cause in which they are embarked. In the mean time, the wise men of the heathen nations are suffered to possess, without contradiction, all the reputation which their countrymen in after-ages have thought fit to bestow upon them. Nay,

ſometimes to ſerve a certain purpoſe, their character is increaſed and magnified beyond all reaſonable bounds.—What pains have been taken by thoſe Chriſtians, who patronize the modern inventions and improvements in theology, to undermine the characters of the moſt eminent champions of the ancient faith? What would ſome perſons teach us to believe of Athanaſius and Auguſtine in earlier, Calvin, Luther and Melancthon in later times? Not that we have not well atteſted evidence of their piety and integrity, but that, being of different ſentiments from their accuſers, the excellence of their character is too good a ſupport to their cauſe.*a*

2. Another reaſon why the ſervants of God are repreſented as troubleſome is, becauſe they will not, and dare not comply with the ſinful commandments of men. In matters merely civil, good men are the moſt regular citizens and the moſt obedient ſubjects. But, as they have a Maſter in heaven, no earthly power can conſtrain them to deny his name or deſert his cauſe. The reply of Peter and John to the Jewiſh rulers when they were commanded "Not to ſpeak at all or teach in the name of Jeſus,"

a I take the opportunity here to add, That the principle above laid down, will plainly account for the great and unaſſaulted reputation, which the Monks and retired devotees ſo long enjoyed in popiſh times. It was their reputation, indeed, which upheld for ſo long a period, that immenſe load of idolatrous ſuperſtition, the Romiſh religion; and it was not loſt, till they were groſly corrupted, and convents were become receptacles of the moſt ſhameful impurity and luſt. Theſe perſons were ſeparated from the world. No frequent, and few near compariſons, could be made between them and others. Nay, their character was voluntary, and peculiar to themſelves, containing no pretence of an obligation upon all others to imitate it; and therefore, they were ſuffered to live unenvied. But if any perſons of piety towards God, and fidelity to their Maſter's cauſe, live in the world, and refuſe to be conformed to it, they muſt expect the ſame treatment that he met with. This he hath told them himſelf, "If the world hate you, ye "know that it hated me before it hated you.*a*——The ſervant "is not greater than the Lord. If they have perſecuted me, "they will alſo perſecute you; if they have kept my ſaying, "they will keep yours alſo."*b*

a John xv. 18. *b* Verſe 20.

was in the following terms, "Whether it be right in the "sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, "judge ye."*a* With what invincible conſtancy and reſolution did Shadrach, Meſhach, and Abednego refuſe to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image? The caſe of Daniel was perfectly ſimilar, whom even the king's commandment could not reſtrain from prayer to God.

When good men are unhappily brought into theſe circumſtances, their conduct is an apparent contradiction to authority. How ready are lordly and oppreſſive tyrants to ſtyle it obſtinacy and pride? And when are there wanting ſlaviſh and ſubmiſſive flatterers near every inferior tribunal, to aggravate the crime, and to cry, "If thou "let this man go, thou art not Cæſar's friend?" It is not to be imagined, indeed, but ſuch as are ſtrangers to true religion, muſt be greatly provoked at thoſe who will not comply implicitly with their commands. There is a remarkable paſſage in a letter of Pliny the younger, to the emperor Trajan, which plainly points out the ſentiments entertained by many on this ſubject. He was a man in other matters abundantly humane, and yet hear his own account of his treatment of the Chriſtians when brought to his tribunal. "I aſked them if they were Chriſtians; "if they confeſſed, I aſked them again threatening pu- "niſhment. If they perſiſted, I commanded them to be "executed; for I did not at all doubt but, whatever their "confeſſion was, their ſtubborneſs and inflexible obſtina- "cy ought to be puniſhed."

There is a love of dominion natural to all men, which is under no controul or reſtraint in thoſe who are void of religion. This muſt naturally diſpoſe them to carry on their ſchemes, and to inſiſt on having them univerſally complied with. It frets and provokes them, therefore, to find any who will not be ſubſervient to their pleaſures. A refuſal to obey, on a principle of conſcience, is expreſsly ſetting bounds to their authority, and ſaying, Hitherto ſhalt thou go, but no further. How few are able to bear this with patience, the hiſtory of the world in every age is one continued proof.

a Acts iv. 19.

Such refufals alfo, do always reflect fome difhonor upon the meafures to which they ftand in oppofition. Whatever any perfon refufes to do, he, as far as in him lies, repreſents as wrong and ſinful; and, in ſome reſpects, unworthy or unfit to be done. Thus it comes to be conſidered not only as withdrawing his own allegiance, but as corrupting and ſeducing others. And no doubt, it tends to draw the attention of the world to the diſputed command, and makes ſome, perhaps, ſift and examine what they had before blindly gone into without ſuſpicion.—Hence it naturally follows, that whenever ſuch interference happens between human and divine authority, good men muſt be conſidered as diſorderly and troubleſome; and thoſe of them of all others moſt troubleſome, who with the greateſt conſtancy adhere to their duty, or who, with the greateſt honeſty and boldneſs, reſiſt and oppoſe corrupt meaſures.

It is leſs ſurpriſing to find inſtances of this between heathen and Chriſtian, between the profeſſing ſervants and open enemies of the true God. But it is aſtoniſhing to think, how often the ſame thing has happened between Chriſtian and Chriſtian, who ought to have been better acquainted with the rights of conſcience, the meaſures of ſubmiſſion, and the duty of forbearance. Not only all the perſecutions, but many, if not moſt, of the ſchiſms and diviſions that have fallen out in the Chriſtian church, have ariſen from the rigorous impoſitions of uſurped authority. Unjuſt authority is the very eſſence of popery. The church of Rome has expreſsly claimed a power of making laws to bind the conſcience, diſtinct from the laws of God; and ſeverely puniſhes all who call this authority in queſtion. Nor hath this been confined to them: proteſtant churches, though their ſeparation is founded upon the very contrary principle, have yet often in practice acted in the ſame arbitrary manner. They inſiſt upon obedience to all their appointments, however ſinful in the judgment of the ſubject: and, as a good man will not comply in ſuch caſes, how often doth it happen, that, after they have expelled him from their ſociety, ſtript him of his office, and robbed him of his maintenance, they alſo

caſt out his name as evil, loudly charge him as ſeditious and troubleſome, and the author of all that confuſion which their own tyranny occaſions.

3. One other reaſon why the ſervants of God are accuſed as troubleſome, is, becauſe they are, in many inſtances, obliged, to bear teſtimony againſt the ſins of others, and openly to reprove them. Reproof is plainly, of all others, the greateſt offence and provocation of the proud, and draws down their heavieſt reſentment: and yet it is often unavoidable. There are ſome caſes in which every Chriſtian without exception, muſt feel the conſtraint of this divine law. "Thou ſhalt in any wiſe re- "buke thy neighbor, and not ſuffer ſin upon him."*a*— Some ſins are ſo flagrant in their nature that, even to witneſs them with ſilence, would imply ſome participation of the guilt. In ſuch caſes it is the glory of the pooreſt and meaneſt ſervant of God, to reſent the diſhonor that is done to his name, and reprove the moſt exalted ſinner.

But this duty, and the odium ariſing from it, falls moſt frequently to the ſhare of the prophets and miniſters of God, who have received a commiſſion to ſpeak in his name and to plead his cauſe. The faithful diſcharge of their duty, includes in it plainneſs and boldneſs in reproving ſin of every kind. They muſt aſſert and maintain the truth, and point out the errors oppoſite to it, with all their guilty fruits, and all their dreadful conſequences. How offenſive this to human pride? It muſt certainly either convince or provoke, reform or inflame. When righteous Lot ſays, in the mildeſt terms, to the luſtful Sodomites, "I pray "you brethren, do not ſo wickedly," how fierce is the anſwer? "And they ſaid, ſtand back. And they ſaid "again, This one fellow came in to ſojourn, and he will "needs be a judge."*b*

How many martyrs to truth have there been ſince the world began? without mentioning thoſe in the Old Teſtament, you ſee John the Baptiſt loſt his life by reproving the inceſtuous adultery of Herod and Herodias. Our bleſſed Saviour gives the following account of the hatred of the world to him, and the contrary reception it gave to

a Lev. xix. 17. *b* Gen. xix. 9.

his temporiſing brethren, The world cannot hate you; "but me it hateth, becauſe I teſtify of it, that the works "thereof are evil." By conſulting the hiſtory of the goſpel you will find, that what gave riſe to the conſpiracy of the Scribes and Phariſees againſt him, was his dragging off the maſk under which they lay concealed, and diſcovering the errors of their doctrine, and the licentiouſneſs of their practice. When they "perceived that he ſpake "againſt them,—they took counſel againſt him to put him "to death;" and accompliſhed it ſo ſoon as they could do it with ſafety. But there cannot be a better example, or indeed, a more lively and well drawn picture of the effect of plain and juſt reproof, than in the caſe of Stephen, when pleading his cauſe before the Jewiſh rulers. "Ye "ſtiff-necked, and uncircumciſed in heart and ears, ye do "always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt: as your fathers did, ſo do "ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers per-"ſecuted? And they have ſlain them which ſhewed be-"fore of the coming of the juſt One; of whom you have "been now the betrayers and murderers.—When they "heard theſe things, they were cut to the heart, and they "gnaſhed on him with their teeth."*a* It is plainly for this reaſon that the apoſtles, in their prayers for aſſiſtance, do almoſt conſtantly aſk, that they may be endued with a proper degree of boldneſs and reſolution, "And now, Lord, "behold their threatnings; and grant unto thy ſervants "that with all boldneſs they may ſpeak thy word."*b* Many other prayers are to be found in the apoſtolic writings which run in the ſame ſtrain.*c*

It is very natural for every one at this diſtance, to imagine, that he could have been in no danger of making ſuch an obſtinate reſiſtance to the truth, or perſecuting, with ſuch implacable enmity, thoſe who eſpouſed it. But, my brethren, all worldly men, in every age, have ſtill the ſame abhorrence of the faithful ſervants of God; the ſame impatience of reproof, when it touches themſelves. Our Saviour draws their character with great beauty, in ſpeak-

a Acts vii. 51, 52, 54. *b* Acts iv. 29. *c* See Eph. vii. 19.

ing to the Phariſees; "Wo unto you Scribes and Phari-
"ſees, hypocrites, becauſe ye build the tombs of the pro-
"phets, and garniſh the ſepulchres of the righteous; and
"ſay, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would
"not have been partakers with them in the blood of the
"prophets. Wherefore ye be witneſſes unto yourſelves,
"that ye are the children of them which killed the pro-
"phets."*a* It is very delicately hinted in this laſt verſe, that they were of the ſame nature, that they grew, as it were, upon the ſame ſtock, and therefore it might be expected that they would bring forth the ſame fruit. I cannot but here mention a remark of a very eminent writer upon this paſſage; "That all nations partake much of this
"diſpoſition of the Jews, to honor the dead ſaints, and
perſecute the living."*b*

I have taken notice above, that in every period of the church, the moſt faithful of the ſervants and miniſters of God, have, in fact, been counted troubleſome by corrupt and worldly men. The ſame paſſages of hiſtory conſtantly ſhew, that this has ariſen chiefly from their attempts to ſtem the tide of prevailing vice; from their boldneſs and faithfulneſs in reproving faſhionable crimes. In the twelfth century, Arnulphus, a devout man, and excellent preacher, ſpeaks thus to the clergy: "I know that you
"ſeek my life, and will ſhortly kill me: But why? I
"ſpeak the truth to you, I reprehend your pride and
"haughtineſs, avarice and luxury: therefore I pleaſe you
"not."*c* And in the fourteenth century, an ancient writer ſpeaks of the court of Rome in the following terms:
"For what can you conceive will happen where virtue
"was long ago extinct and buried? There ſurely truth
"is the higheſt crime, and of itſelf ſufficient to procure
"the hatred of many. For how can we expect but that
"ſhould happen, where a true word cannot be ſpoken
"without a great reproach, where the worſt of men are
"promoted,—where ſimplicity is eſteemed madneſs,—
"where good men are rendered ridiculous, inſomuch that

a Matt. xxiii. 29, 30, 31. *b* Tillotſon.

c Whitby's App. to his book on Hoſt-worſhip.

" now ſcarce any of them doth appear but to be laughed " at. Theſe few things truth itſelf hath dared to ſpeak, " whence you may gather what you are to think of many " others, which fear doth force me to conceal."*a* It is unneceſſary to cite many paſſages to this purpoſe; I ſhall therefore conclude this head with the following juſt reflection of the pious, diligent, and catholic Mr. Baxter; " I ſee there is no help for it, but we muſt offend wicked " men. It is impoſſible to avoid it, but either by our " ſilence or their patience. Silent we cannot be, be- " cauſe the word of God commands us to ſpeak; and " patient they cannot be, becauſe ſin has the dominion in " their hearts."

We now proceed, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of what has been ſaid. And,

In the firſt place, You may learn from what has been ſaid upon this ſubject, the juſt and proper anſwer to an objection againſt the goſpel, much inſiſted on by its enemies, viz. That it has introduced perſecution for conſcience ſake, with which the world was in a great meaſure unacquainted before. There are few ſubjects, on which infidels enlarge with greater pleaſure, than the cruel hatred and animoſity that has prevailed; the bloody wars that have been carried on; nay, the ſavage and inhuman maſſacres that have been perpetrated on a religious account, ſince the publication of the goſpel. I think this objection is but ſeldom anſwered as it might be. It is uſually indeed, and juſtly obſerved, that whatever may have been done by thoſe profeſſing the goſpel, there is no countenance given in it to ſuch a ſpirit and practice. But the objection is not wholly removed, while infidels are allowed ſtill to contend, as if it ſerved their own cauſe, that perſecution has been its conſtant attendant and inſeparable effect. We ought therefore, to wreſt this argument out of their hands, and firſt to produce this fact as an accompliſhment of our Saviour's prediction; " Think not " that I am come to ſend peace on earth: I came not to

a Petrarch's Ep.

" ſend peace, but a ſword. For I am come to ſet a man " at variance againſt his father, and the daughter againſt " her mother, and the daughter-in-law againſt her mother- " in-law. And a man's foes ſhall be they of his own " houſhold."*a*

Having gone thus far, we have reaſon to contend that the diſciples of Chriſt have always ſuffered, and never inflicted the injury, though they have often been obliged to bear the blame. The multitude of heathen religions, though not always, yet did generally agree together: and well they might, for they were all from the ſame author. None of them, however, could agree with the goſpel: for this plain reaſon, that " no lie is of the truth." But from what quarter did the violence proceed? Did not the dreadful perſecutions againſt the Chriſtians, in the three firſt centuries, proceed from the heathens? Did the Chriſtians commit any other crime againſt them, than pointing out the ſin and danger of their idolatrous worſhip, and immoral practices? Was not this alone ſufficient to raiſe a cry againſt them, as turning the world upſide down? And in all the ſubſequent perſecutions among profeſſing Chriſtians, was it any thing elſe than the proud, violent, and worldly ſpirit of thoſe who made a gain of godlineſs, oppreſſing the few real believers of every denomination? There is an antichriſtian ſpirit in every church, that ſhews itſelf in perſecution, in a greater or leſſer degree. But there can be nothing more unjuſt, than to attribute the perſecution of Chriſt's diſciples by his enemies and theirs, to the ſpirit of his religion.

Is it then boldly affirmed by ſome, that the Chriſtian is the only religion in the world that leads to perſecution? I anſwer, on the contrary, It is the only religion that has ſuffered perſecution from all its numerous enemies; and at the ſame time, it is the only religion in the world that requires, and points out the obligation, of mutual forbearance, and makes the juſt and proper diviſion between the things that are Cæſar's, and the things that are God's. That it is often blamed as perſecuting others, is a proof

* Matth. x. 34, 35, 36.

and illuſtration of this truth. For all is of a piece, and the falſe accuſation ariſes from the ſource which I have opened up above, and confirmed by examples produced from hiſtory. To theſe I ſhall now only add one obſervation, which comes in with peculiar propriety here; That innumerable inſtances may be given, in which thoſe very perſons who were ready to lift the ſecular arm againſt good men, have loudly complained of the exerciſe of diſcipline, and the cenſures of the church upon their crimes. Theſe they often ſtyle perſecution, and always affirm to flow from a perſecuting ſpirit. But as they are often neceſſary, ſo even when they are unjuſtly applied, it is plain from their very nature, that if they be groundleſs, they muſt be perfectly harmleſs.

Thus the ſtate of the world is ſo far from being an objection againſt, that it is a proof of the truth of the goſpel. True Chriſtians have ſuffered from every quarter; from within and from without; from open enemies and from falſe brethren. They have been firſt perſecuted, and then ſlandered as perſecuting others; nay, obliged to bear the odium of that very oppreſſion under which they groaned. Of all this they are fairly fore-warned by their Saviour, who ſays, "Behold, I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt "of wolves." They are expoſed to injurious treatment from many, and may expect to ſuffer without cauſe. None however make ſo cruel a havoc, as thoſe wolves who put on ſheep's clothing; and yet, of all their cruelty, the poor ſuffering ſheep muſt bear the blame.

2. From what hath been ſaid, you may ſee the guilt and danger of thoſe who falſely accuſe the children of God. Perhaps you may be ready wholly to refuſe the charge, and to ſay, Where is the neceſſity, where is the propriety of this at preſent? Have we not all civil and religious liberty? and are not religion and its miniſters in eſteem and repute? I anſwer, It is never unneceſſary. The fault I complain of is no part of the peculiar degeneracy of this age. It is not confined to any one age, country, or profeſſion, but is common to them all: and we would but deceive ourſelves, ſhould we fondly fancy we are exempted from it. Nay, our preſent ſtate as a church and na-

tion, seems to render such a warning peculiarly seasonable. We have long enjoyed outward peace. In every other country this has introduced a worldly spirit, ambition, luxury, and sloth. And is there no vestige of these characters among us now? Who will pretend it? Are there not some who cannot endure such strictness as is inconsistent with conformity to the gay and fashionable world? Do not all such incline to charge every profession of piety with hypocrisy? Do they not consider every faithful reprover, as an enemy to their peace? Do they not hear with secret pleasure, and spread with apparent triumph, every report, to the prejudice of such troublers of Israel?

This then is the character; and as many of you as conscience charges with the guilt, may see your danger. You may see whose cause you plead, and whose reward you shall share. What inward enmity do you discover against the spirit and power of true religion? You are of the number of those who "Hate the light, and will not "come to the light, lest your deeds should be reproved." You are of the number of those who say "to the seers, see "not, and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right "things, speak unto us smooth things, and prophesy de-"ceit." You will not "endure sound doctrine," but love and follow only that which will exercise and amuse your imagination and fancy, sooth and gratify your pride and vanity, or make and keep you at peace with yourselves. You are asleep in security, and will avoid every thing that may tend to disturb or interrupt your dangerous repose. And how hurtful is your conduct to others? You blast the characters and lessen the usefulness of the ministers of Christ. You bring an evil report upon the truth, by rendering them odious or contemptible who bear it. —And if we, my brethren, who are ministers of the gospel, imitate this example in any measure, if we discover a suspicion and jealousy, or an aversion and hatred, at all who are more diligent than ourselves, what dishonor must fall upon our profession, what a hindrance is it to the edification of others, and what guilt do we bring upon our own souls.

3. If this has been the conſtant lot of all the ſervants of God, to be accuſed as ſeditious and troubleſome, let every cautious perſon beware of being miſled by the perſecuting cry. I aſk any man who is converſant in the world, if he hath not, in many inſtances, been inſenſibly taught to form a hateful idea, or to entertain a deſpicable opinion of many miniſters, without the leaſt perſonal knowledge, the leaſt ſatisfying evidence or proof. What is the reaſon? Why, he hath been told, that they are proud, hypocritical, factious, cenſorious, troubleſome men. Well, the thing is poſſible, no doubt. But, in the mean time, it is far from being certain; and this ſort of character induſtriouſly propagated, is no evidence of it at all, or rather is a preſumption of the contrary. You ſee, from the inſtances produced above, that this is a reproach perpetually thrown upon the moſt upright and faithful of the ſervants of God; that it may very naturally ariſe from their fidelity itſelf; and that it cannot be avoided by thoſe who reſiſt the corrupt meaſures, who reprove the public vices, or who ſhame the criminal lazineſs, and negligence of others. An ignorant, vicious, worthleſs miniſter, is envied by no body. He is therefore quite ſafe from all the poiſoned arrows which fly from that quarter. He is rather a foil to many, to ſet off and illuſtrate their own comparative excellence. He is therefore often pardoned, pitied, and protected. Whereas a faithful miniſter, who openly dares to bear witneſs againſt the apoſtacy of others, is traduced and ſlandered, loaded with imaginary crimes, and often falls a martyr to the ſinking cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs.

4. Since the world is ſo prone to receive the accuſation of faction againſt the children of God, let them be careful to give no real ground for it. Unjuſt calumny has ſometimes the contrary effect. When men find, that it is impoſſible to pleaſe a capricious world, or wholly to eſcape ſlander, they are apt to give up all ſolicitude upon that head, and take no farther pains to avoid ſuſpected appearances. This I take to be, preciſely, what the Scripture calls being "overcome of evil." But how much better is it "to overcome evil with good?" Let us, as often as poſſi-

ble, confute the accuſation by an unblameable carriage; and when we muſt ſuffer, let us be careful that we ſuffer, not as evil doers, but for well doing. For this purpoſe I would humbly offer to miniſters the two following directions, which I eſteem of great moment.

(1.) Let all our zeal for the glory of God be conducted not only with ſteadineſs, but with meekneſs. Let us ever remember, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God. Let our language be always ſtrictly guarded, and free from expreſſions of rage and fury. If we are faithful to our duty, it will ſufficiently provoke ſinners, we need not add to it by any mixture of human paſſion. What noble and effectual principles are we furniſhed with in Scripture, for avoiding every dangerous extreme? Love to God, and love to man, make up the ſum of practical religion. Theſe are the immediate fruits of faith, and all the truths of the goſpel tend to ſtrengthen and improve them. And as love to God produces indignation againſt ſin, reſolution and boldneſs in oppoſing it; ſo, love to man will naturally produce the deepeſt compaſſion for the miſerable ſtate of every enemy of God, and prevent firmneſs from degenerating into violence.

(2.) The other direction I would offer upon this ſubject is, that miniſters take care to avoid officiouſly intermeddling in civil matters. A miniſter ſhould be ſeparated and ſet apart for his own work; he ſhould be conſecrated to his office. It is little glory to him to be eminently ſkilled in any other ſcience, except ſuch as may be handmaids to theology, and are by him habitually turned into a divine channel. Miniſters giving themſelves to worldly employments, have been commonly of bad fame; and where there is a ſufficient proviſion made for their maintenance, ſeems to be an unjuſt alienation of their time and talents. But it is ſtill more ſinful and dangerous, for them to deſire or claim the direction of ſuch matters as fall within the province of the civil magiſtrate. When our bleſſed Saviour ſays, "My kingdom is not of this "world," he plainly intimates to his diſciples that they have no title to intermeddle with ſtate affairs. Nay, he expreſsly warns them againſt a lordly and arbitrary do-

minion, even in their own proper ſphere. "The kings "of the Gentiles exerciſe lordſhip over them; and they "that exerciſe authority upon them are called benefactors. "But ye ſhall not be ſo: but he that is greateſt among you "let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he "that doth ſerve."*a* I cannot help mentioning here, that this is one of the things, for which our worthy anceſtors of the church of Scotland (now deſpiſed by many) deſerve the higheſt commendation. It was an invariable principle with them, to be againſt the civil power and places of kirkmen. And ſurely, if miniſters confine themſelves entirely to their own proper duty, they will be much leſs liable to exception than otherwiſe. They may then, warrantably uſe the greateſt fidelity in reproving, and the greateſt ſtrictneſs in diſcipline; and though the wicked ſlander and oppoſe them, the good will defend them, and God will ſupport them.

5. In the laſt place, Since the charge of faction and ſedition has been always brought againſt faithful miniſters, let us learn to bear it with patience, and never diſſemble the truth, or depart, in any meaſure, from our duty, in order to avoid it. A perſon of a generous mind feels a wound in his reputation more deeply, than almoſt any other injury. We are ſtill apt fondly to flatter ourſelves, that as religion is truly amiable in itſelf, and ought to make no enemies, that therefore we ſhall have none.—Some are very apt to omit, or ſlightly to perform, ſeveral parts of their duty, through that "fear of man that bring-"eth a ſnare." They are unwilling to forego the hope, that by certain prudent compliances they will conciliate and preſerve the favor of every man and every party. But the expectation is wholly vain. The experience of many ages hath proved it ſo. Let us therefore bear with patience the falſe accuſation. It hath been the lot of the beſt and worthieſt men in every age. It was the lot of our bleſſed maſter, and ſhall we refuſe to bear his croſs? Is it not "enough for the diſciple that he be as his maſter, and "the ſervant that he be as his Lord?" The triumph of

a Luke xxii. 25, 26.

ſinners is but very ſhort. In a little time all earthly relations ſhall be diſſolved. Then high and low, magiſtrates and ſubjects, miniſters and people, ſhall ſtand before the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt. He ſhall "render to every one "according to his deeds." There the great and noble ſhall find no partial favour; there the poor and mean ſhall not eſcape obſervation; and there the lying ſlanderer ſhall be put to eternal ſilence. He ſhall openly acknowledge every faithful ſervant, and "bring forth his righteouſneſs "as the light, and his judgment as the noon day."

THE

CHARGE.

SIR,

AS you are now ordained a miniſter of Chriſt, and have received the charge of this congregation, I hope you will bear with me a little, while I offer you a few advices as to the diſcharge of your important truſt. And I cannot help beginning by congratulating you on the unanimous call you have received from this people. However deſpiſed by ſome, I count it a moſt happy circumſtance both for you and them. It introduces you with great advantage. It gives you a fair and impartial hearing; and, if you do not preſerve their eſteem and love, it will probably be, in a great meaſure, owing to yourſelf.

I muſt firſt of all beſeech you, in the moſt earneſt manner, to be ſtrict and frequent, in enquiring into the truth and reality of religion in your own ſoul. Perſonal religion is the foundation of all relative duties. They can ſcarcely be performed in any tolerable meaſure without it. It is equally neceſſary to your uſefulneſs, and to your comfort. It is a difficult thing, and it is a dreadful thing, to preach an unknown Saviour. Examine, therefore, whether you are "born again;" whether you have "paſſed from death to life;" whether you are united to Chriſt by faith; whether you know by experience, the difference between a ſtate of nature and a ſtate of grace, or not. While I ſpeak this, I aſſure you, I do not mean it, and I hope none will interpret it, as any reflection againſt, or implying any ſuſpicion of you, who have given me no cauſe. I ſpeak it from a deep impreſſion of its importance to us all. How miſerable a caſe is it, to have it as our buſineſs to bring others to the kingdom of heaven, and

be ourſelves at laſt thruſt out. A miniſter is as much liable to ſelf-deceit as any other, and in ſome reſpects more ſo. We are in danger of thinking ourſelves too eaſily ſafe, by comparing that outward regularity, to which our office itſelf, even from ſecular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of profane ſinners. We may alſo miſtake our frequent thinking and ſpeaking of the "things of God," in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true religion in ourſelves. Nay, we are in danger of miſtaking thoſe gifts, with which God furniſheth us for the benefit of his own people, for the fruits of the Spirit, and gracious diſpoſitions in our own hearts. Maintain, therefore, a holy jealouſy over yourſelf. Give di- "ligence to make your calling and election ſure." And, if you ſave your own ſoul, you will probably carry many others with you to a better world; and be able to ſay, after the example of Chriſt, "Behold I, and the children "whom God hath given me."

As to the duties of your office, ſee that you preach the pure and uncorrupted doctrine of Chriſt. Preach Chriſt crucified, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life;" and without whom "no man can go unto the Father." You will never be able to make men truly good, till you convince them of their loſt ſtate by nature; and thence make them ſee the neceſſity of juſtification by the free grace of God, through the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt. If you would know what place Chriſt ought to hold in your preaching and ſcheme of doctrine, obſerve what room he fills in the oracles of truth. To the croſs of Chriſt give all the prophets witneſs. The croſs of Chriſt is the ſum and ſubſtance of the New Teſtament. The croſs of Chriſt is the Chriſtian's hope. The croſs of Chriſt is the Chriſtian's glory. You ſee, by a ſerious peruſal of the New Teſtament, that the ſacred writers largely illuſtrate the ſeveral parts of his character and office, and ſeem with pleaſure to embrace every opportunity of ſpeaking to his praiſe. They ſhow how much we are to depend upon him for ſtrength in the diſcharge of our duty; and enforce all their exhortations by motives drawn from what he hath done, and is ſtill doing, for his church and people. You

will ſoon find from experience, that no cold reaſonings on the nature and beauty of virtue, can have ſuch influence in mortifying corrupt affections, as a believing view of a pierced Saviour. For this very reaſon many deteſt the doctrine of the croſs. It gives a mortal blow to every darling luſt. It gives ſuch a view of the holineſs and juſtice of God, as is intolerable to all thoſe who cannot think of breaking their attachment to ſin and vanity.

There is one particular reaſon why I have mentioned this at preſent, and inſiſted on it at ſome length. It is ordinary to meet with ſerious perſons who complain much, that from many pulpits they hear little or nothing of the doctrine of the grace of God; that the grand and leading truths of the goſpel are either flatly contradicted, or kept entirely out of view, and ſomething elſe ſubſtituted in their place. I am far from ſaying that this is indeed the caſe. On the contrary, I tremble to think that it ſhould be but barely poſſible; for all theſe doctrine are clearly contained in the Confeſſion of Faith, which every miniſter in Scotland has ſubſcribed. If, therefore, there be any one among us, who doth not preach the doctrine of original ſin, of Chriſt's imputed righteouſneſs, juſtification by free grace, the neceſſity of regeneration, and the operations of the Spirit, he is guilty of perjury of the worſt kind, for which I know no excuſe. Such a perſon is not only chargeable with departing from the faith, but with an abſolute proſtitution of conſcience, and a whole life of hypocriſy and deceit. I am indeed entirely at a loſs how to account for this apprehenſion in the people, of a difference in doctrine; but as there certainly is ſuch an apprehenſion, I think I cannot diſcharge my duty on this occaſion, without exhorting you to be clear and explicit upon theſe heads. The truth is, they are of ſo general conſequence, and have ſo neceſſary a connexion with every other part of religion, that, be the ſubject what it will, where they are firmly believed, I ſhould imagine the manner of thinking and ſpeaking would be ſuch, as to leave no jealouſy of an intended omiſſion.

This leads me to exhort you, to preach plainly, or in a way that may be level to the capacities of the hearers,

both as to ſentiment and expreſſion. God forbid, that I ſhould deſire you to ruſh into a pulpit without preparation, to preach in a diſorderly method, or in a mean, ſlovenly or indecent ſtyle. All pains ſhould be taken to ſeek out fit and "acceptable words." But there cannot be a greater abſurdity in ſpeaking to a multitude of common people, than to diſcourſe in ſuch a ſtiff and abſtract way, as it is plainly impoſſible for them to comprehend. Nor is it any leſs abſurdity to dreſs up an harrangue with exceſſive elegance, and a vain, ornamented foppery of ſtyle. Some diſcourſes may very well be likened to painted windows, which, with fine colours upon themſelves, keep out the light, and make the houſe comfortleſs and dark. Such conduct is ordinarily followed by thoſe, who would willingly recommend themſelves to perſons of better taſte; but it muſt evidently render them contemptible to every perſon of ſound judgment. However, it is much worſe than abſurd; for it is very wicked, when the everlaſting ſalvation of ſinners is at ſtake, to ſpeak in ſuch a manner as they cannot underſtand, or ſuch as tends only to amuſe their fancy, and never can reach their hearts. If we would know what is a proper and juſt manner of ſtyle and compoſition in preaching, let us conſider how any man would ſpeak, if he was on trial for his own life. Would he not ſpeak with great plainneſs, earneſtneſs and force? And is not the ſalvation of ſouls of infinitely more moment than any man's life? And ſhould it not, if we believe the Scriptures, be more regarded by every faithful miniſter?

You muſt alſo take care to preach experimentally and particularly. You will ſoon find that this is the only profitable way of preaching, and that, unleſs you apply general truths to the ſeveral claſſes and characters in your audience, they will make but a ſorry improvement of the beſt inſtruction. The ignorant cannot, and the wiſer will not apply them to themſelves. Beſides, the general way is not only uſeleſs but pernicious and hurtful. Suppoſe I ſhould make an encomium on the wiſe, juſt and gracious government of God over his rational creation, and obſerve what reaſon all have to rejoice under his adminiſ-

tration. Should I say so to this audience without distinction, it would be to many a dangerous and stupifying poison. A just and holy God, is a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity. Those who are still in their sins, should tremble to think of the government of God.

Besides public preaching, you must be diligent among your people "from house to house." You must not neglect family instruction, and personal admonition or reproof. This is, if not the most useful part of a minister's work, at least absolutely necessary to the success of his preaching. It is also by far the most laborious part, from which slothful men are most apt to excuse themselves. A man may gratify his vanity by preaching, and public performances; or, the neglect being visible, he may be compelled to regularity by fear of reproach or persecution. But diligence in private, can scarcely arise from any thing but a sense of duty, and of the presence and observation of God.

The exercise of discipline is another part of your duty which must not be omitted. It is of very great moment to the interest of religion. It is a saying of one of the first reformers, "They that desire to banish discipline, "desire to banish Christ from his church." There must needs be offences in the Christian church. But when discipline is neglected, then the offence becomes unspeakably more dangerous, especially to the young and weak. It makes them think lightly of the character and privileges of a Christian, when there is either a promiscuous admission to church-communion, or when openly wicked persons are suffered to continue without censure. When you come to instruct young persons, in order to renewing their baptismal engagements in the Lord's supper; or, if ever you have occasion to instruct a heathen in order to baptism, I can assure you, from experience, you will find the unhappy effect of the low state of discipline among us. It will immediately strike yourself, and these catechumens will soon betray, by their discourse, how hard it is to have a just sense of the sanctity of the Christian character, while so many profane persons are suffered to be called Christians; and not a few whose conduct is very exceptionable,

continue to be admitted at ſtated times, to the ſeals of God's covenant.

How inexcuſeable are we in this neglect? If the firſt Chriſtians, without the help or ſanction of an eſtabliſhment, kept ſo ſtrict a diſcipline, what might we do, who have the countenance and approbation of the civil power. In diſcipline then, be ſtrict, regular, and impartial. Eſpecially be impartial. It is commonly want of impartiality, that makes us fail in ſtrictneſs. You will have many enemies to impartiality in diſcipline. You will have the great and wealthy, many of whom, though they live in open defiance of the laws and ordinances of Chriſt, yet will be much offended, and complain of it as a grievous injury, if by a judicial ſentence you deprive them of his name. Nay, you will find in every congregation ſome profeſſing piety, who, though they are well pleaſed with, and commend the ſtrict exerciſe of diſcipline in the caſe of others, yet when it comes to touch themſelves, or their own relations, will uſe many arts to evade it. But if you be firm and unbiaſſed in ſo good a cauſe, it will have a ſenſible effect.

This leads me to exhort you in the whole of your work, public and private, to beware of the ſin of man-pleaſing. I do not ſay, beware of popularity: becauſe, in the ſenſe to which common language hath confined that word, it is but one half of the ſnare. Beſides, in propriety of ſpeech, popularity ſhould ſignify only being accepted and beloved, which in itſelf is neither duty nor ſin, but a bleſſing. Man-pleaſing ſignifies, in Scripture, having this as the end and motive of our actions, rather than being acceptable to God. You ought, indeed, for edification, to avoid diſpleaſing any without neceſſity. But as in this, ſo in every other thing, you ſhould have a far higher principle, than merely courting the favor either of great or ſmall, good or bad. It is, doubtleſs, a mean and deſpicable principle, to act only with a view of gaining the applauſe of the vulgar and ignorant. But I have often wondered, how ſome ſhould ſo boldly and uncharitably lay this to the charge of their brethren, without conſidering how eaſy it is, with at leaſt,

equal juſtice, to preſume that they are under the influence of, and acting with a view to pleaſe the great. I am ſure, there is a much ſtronger temptation to this than the former. And, if I am not miſtaken, fawning and ſervility hath been the road, in which ambitious and corrupt churchmen have travelled to preferment in every age. The truth is, they are equally deteſtable in the ſight of God. But the laſt is much more deſtructive to the intereſt of religion than the firſt. The favor of the multitude can ſcarcely be obtained, without either the truth or the appearance of piety; but the favor of the great is often obtained by ſilence, and ſuffering them in their crimes, being aſſiſtant in their pleaſures, or ſubſervient to their political deſigns.

To deliver you, Sir, from both, remember the condition on which you hold your office. "Son of man, I "have made thee a watchman to the houſe of Iſrael: there- "fore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning "from me. When I ſay unto the wicked, Thou ſhalt "ſurely die; and thou giveſt him not warning, nor "ſpeakeſt to warn the wicked from his wicked way to ſave "his life: the ſame wicked man ſhall die in his iniquity, "but his blood will I require at thine hand."*a* Forget then the fooliſh accuſations of popularity or vanity; and conſider, that your people are daily carried to their graves, and you muſt give an account of every ſoul that periſhes through your neglect.

To conclude, be much in earneſt prayer to God, that he would fit you for your work, and crown your labours with ſucceſs. Prayer is abſolutely neceſſary to the ſtedfaſtneſs and growth of every believer, and eſpecially to a miniſter. If you believe the goſpel, you will believe that "every good gift cometh from above; that God only can make you an able and uſeful paſtor; and this will make you importunate with him for a plentiful meaſure of the Holy Spirit to fit you for his ſervice. And I deſire to join in praying, that God, for Chriſt's ſake, would make you an "able miniſter of the New Teſtament,"—and help you to preach the goſpel, not with the wiſdom of "words,"—but with "the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from "heaven."

a Ezek. iii. 17, 18.

EXHORTATION

TO THE

PEOPLE.

My Brethren,

YOU have heard the charge given to your miniſter. Are there then, ſo many duties incumbent on him by his ſtanding in the relation of a paſtor to you? is not the relation mutual? And are there not ſeveral correſpondent duties incumbent on you as his people? I beg your patience, while I put you in mind of a few of the moſt important and neceſſary.

In the firſt place, it is evidently your duty diligently to attend upon his miniſtry. It is plainly impoſſible that you can profit by him, if you do not hear him. I am ſorry that there are many in theſe days, who pour contempt upon the ordinances of Chriſt's inſtitution. But in particular, there hath been, of late, a great and remarkable deſertion of public worſhip by thoſe of higher rank. There is a happy opportunity in this caſe to put all ſuch among you in mind, that having ſubſcribed a call to their miniſter, they ſtand bound by conſent to attend upon him. Is it not ſurpriſing to think, that any ſhould forget the terms in which that invitation runs. You intreat him "to take "the charge of your ſouls, and promiſe him all due obe- "dience and ſubmiſſion in the Lord." Can a man honeſtly ſubſcribe this, who ſeldom comes within the walls of any church? One would be counted infamous in the world, who ſhould act in the face of a ſigned obligation, in any other matter, or who even ſhould falſify a ſolemn

promiſe. And, is it leſs criminal, becauſe it relates to religion and the ſervice of God? It is indeed ſeldom reſented or puniſhed by men, becauſe the offence is not immediately againſt them, but it remains to be puniſhed by that righteous God, "To whom vengeance belongs,— "and who will not be mocked."

In the next place, my brethren, let me intreat you to be tender of the character of your miniſter, and of miniſters in general. As their office makes the guilt of their ſins great, and as a ſtain on their character is moſt hurtful to religion, on both accounts, you ought not raſhly to receive an accuſation againſt them. I do not mean to aſk indulgence to the unworthy, I give them up freely to that reproach and contempt which they juſtly deſerve. But let it fall upon the perſon, and not upon the office. Do not transfer the faults of particulars to the whole order. It is eaſy to obſerve the different reception which the faults or miſcarriages of miniſters meet with, from perſons differently diſpoſed. The good are affected with grief and concern for the offence, or filled with zeal and indignation againſt the ſinner. But looſe and careleſs perſons diſparage the profeſſion, and bleſs themſelves in their own uniformity and conſiſtency of character. You may ſpare your reflections, "That miniſters are but men, miniſters "are but like other men," and the like, when, I aſſure you, we deny it not. We have all the ſame great intereſt at ſtake. We often ſpeak the more earneſtly to you, leſt, while we preach the goſpel to others, we ourſelves ſhould be caſt-aways; and many times deſcribe the workings of a deceitful, wandering, ſlothful, worldly mind, by taking the copy from our own.

It falls very properly in my way on this occaſion, to take notice of a reproach thrown upon miniſters, by the miſtake or perverſion of two of the queſtions uſually put at an ordination, and which you have juſt heard put to your miniſter. They are ſuppoſed by many to be ſuch as no man can anſwer with truth, and ſo quite improper to be put at all. The firſt of them is in the following terms, "Are not zeal for the honor of God, love to Jeſus Chriſt, "and deſire of ſaving your ſouls, your great motives, and

"chief inducements, to enter into the function of the ho-
"ly miniſtry, and not worldly deſigns and intereſts."
This is maliciouſly interpreted to ſuppoſe, that a miniſter
in accepting of a fixed charge, hath no view or intention,
primary or ſecondary, of being provided of a mainte-
nance. This would be both unnatural and unreaſonable.
"They that ſerve at the altar, muſt live by the altar."
The plain meaning is, That the great motives of a mi-
niſter, in conſecrating himſelf to this employment, and
accepting the particular ſtation aſſigned him, ought to be
the honor of God, and intereſt of religion, as expreſſed
above. And ſurely, that this ſhould be the caſe, hath
nothing in it incredible in our country, the proviſion for
the miniſtry not being ſo large, but a man of tolerable
abilities hath a much greater hazard of riſing to wealth
and dignity in many other employments. But alas! how
ignorant are they who cavil at this queſtion? Do they
not know that every Chriſtian is bound habitually and ſu-
premely to regard the glory of God in all his actions?
This is not peculiar to miniſters, except ſo far as they
ought to be exemplary in every thing. Wo to every man
in this aſſembly, be his employment what it will, if he
does not habitually point his whole actions to the glory of
God. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price;
"therefore glorify God with your bodies, and your ſpirits,
"which are God's."*a*

The other queſtion is this, "Have you uſed any undue
"methods by yourſelf or others, in procuring this call?"
It is impoſſible to find fault with this queſtion, but by leav-
ing out the word, undue. And indeed, it is ſo far from
being wrong, that there would be no harm if it were more
particularly explained. It was probably intended to diſ-
courage all briguing and ſolicitation, other than a man's
real character does for itſelf, or the free unbiaſſed judgment
of others, inclines them to do in his behalf. I apprehend
it does reach a reproof to all thoſe, who either promote
or hinder ſettlements from political connexions, or in
expectation of temporal favors and to thoſe who, by pro-
miſes or threatnings, endeavour to influence their inferiors

a 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

in such a cause. In the mean time, I dare say it will be allowed, that any thing of this kind done by a minister himself, or at his direction, in his own favor, would be very wrong: and, blessed be God, it is at present among us considered as highly indecent and criminal.

I must also put you in mind of the great duty of family instruction and gorvernment. Heads of families must prepare their children and servants for receiving benefit by public instruction, and endeavor by repetition to fix it in their minds. It is our duty to speak plainly, no doubt; but it is impossible, preserving the dignity of the pulpit, to speak in such a manner as to be understood by those who have had no previous instruction in a familiar way. It is like casting seed upon an unopened, unprepared soil, which takes no root, and brings forth no fruit. Is it not hard, that, when many are so ready to find fault with every neglect of ministers, and sometimes expect more work from one, than ten can perform, they should take so little pains in their families, these smaller districts, which are committed to their own charge.

To conclude all, Strive together with your minister in your prayers to God for him. There is no way more effectual to prepare him for serving you in the gospel, and there is no way more proper for preparing you to attend upon his ministry. If you make conscience of this duty, you will come to receive the answer of your prayers, and indeed to hear the word of God. Alas! that there should be so few of our hearers of this charitable, sympathising kind. We have some stupid and insensible hearers, some proud and disdainful hearers, many criticising and censuring hearers, but few praying hearers. Let all that fear God give themselves to this duty. And let them not only remember that corner of God's vineyard in which their own lot is cast, but the kingdom of Christ in general; and pray, that his name may be great, "from the rising of the son, unto his going down." Amen.

PRAYER for NATIONAL PROSPERITY and for the REVIVAL of RELIGION inſeparably connected.

A

SERMON 40.

Preached on Thurſday, February 16, 1758, being the day appointed in Scotland for the late Public Faſt.

ISAIAH, li. 9.

Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the LORD: Awake as in the ancient days in the generations of old. Art not thou it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the dragon.

MY BRETHREN,

WE are this day called by our ſovereign to the duty of ſolemn faſting and humiliation, and to earneſt prayer for the bleſſing of God on his councils and arms. Religion and humanity conſpire in urging us to a hearty compliance, eſpecially while public affairs wear ſo threatening an aſpect. It ought alſo to awaken the attention, and increaſe the ſerioufneſs of every particular worſhiping aſſembly, that they are joining with ſo many others in intreating deliverance from theſe national calamities, in which all are equally concerned.

We have often, for ſome years paſt, profeſſed to humble ourſelves in the ſight of God, and have done it, alas! with a ſhameful coldneſs and indifference, or with an hypocriſy ſtill more criminal. But it is remarkable, that ſuch is the ſituation of affairs at preſent, as hath given an alarm

even to ſome of the moſt inſenſible, and conſtrained them to conſider this duty as now ſomewhat more than a form. There has been for ſome time paſt, ſuch a continuance and increaſe of public judgments, ſuch a ſeries of abortive projects, and broken diſconcerted ſchemes, as makes the moſt obſtinate and inconſiderate ſtand and pauſe, and ſeriouſly aſk, Is there not a cauſe?

Our ſetting apart this day, and applying ourſelves to the duty of faſting and prayer, implies a confeſſion of the power and providence of God.

It implies, that we believe in him, as the Almighty Creator, and righteous Governor of the world; the ſupreme Diſpoſer of every went, and ſovereign Arbiter of the fate of nations. How were it to be wiſhed, that there was a juſt ſenſe of this truth on the minds of all of every rank! And that, in all who are in any meaſure ſincere on this occaſion, the impreſſion may not be tranſient and partial, but laſting and effectual! It ſhould excite us to a holy jealouſy over ourſelves, that we have ſo often eſſayed the like duty without any apparent ſucceſs. "Is there un-"righteouſneſs with God? God forbid!" The fault, doubtleſs, lies in ourſelves. Our faſts have not been ſuch as God has choſen, and therefore he hath refuſed to hear our prayers.

In general, no doubt the evidence and the effect of an acceptable faſt, is repentance compleated by reformation. Where this is wanting, we are juſtly liable to the charge brought by the prophet Iſaiah againſt the children of Iſrael, "Bring no more vain oblations, incenſe is an abominati-"on unto me, the new moons and ſabbaths, the calling of "aſſemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the "ſolemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appoint-"ed feaſts my ſoul hateth, they are a trouble unto me, I "am weary to bear them. And when ye ſpread forth "your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when "ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are "full of blood."*a* There is no queſtion but the unreſtrained flood of impiety which has overſpread this nation,

a Iſa. i. 13, 14, 15.

ſolicits divine vengeance, and prevents the efficacy even of the ſincere prayers that are offered up for deliverance and mercy. But as, with reſpect to particular perſons, every error or defect in practice is the conſequence of an erroneous or defective principle, as every vicious action proceeds from an impure heart; ſo, in a national capacity, I am perſuaded that our faſting and prayer has been fundamentally wrong, or eſſentially defective in itſelf, and therefore, has been followed by little or no ſenſible fruit; or rather that impiety, which it ſhould have removed, it hath only contributed to increaſe.

For this reaſon my intention at this time is to point out to you what is the juſt and proper object of prayer for divine aid in a time of public calamity, as well as the great encouragement to its exerciſe. For this there is a proper foundation in the paſſage of Scripture juſt read in your hearing. In the former part of the chapter, the prophet had pronounced many gracious promiſes, of inward and ſpiritual proſperity, and of outward protection and ſecurity to the church, though ſurrounded and threatened, by enemies to her intereſts in both reſpects. He then changes the form of his diſcourſe, perſonates believers, and in their name, as one of them, addreſſes to God the prayer in the text, "Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, O "arm of the Lord: awake as in the ancient days, in the "generations of old: art not thou it that hath cut Rahab "and wounded the dragon?"

The beauty and ſtrength of this language, the juſtneſs and force of the figures here uſed, it is almoſt impoſſible to overlook. The prophet prays for ſuch a diſplay of divine power and mercy as might be ſignal and ſenſible. "Awake, awake, put on ſtrength," that is, exert thy power, diſcover thy glory in ſuch a manner, as that thy preſent forbearance may be like the vigor of a waking man, compared to the defenceleſs and inactive ſtate of one that is faſt aſleep. "O arm of the Lord." This expreſſion, the arm of the Lord, with the addition of making bare his holy arm, is frequently uſed in Scripture; and it is ſo ſtrong, and at the ſame time, ſo intelligible a figure, that it is impoſſible to amplify or explain, without weak-

ening it. In the laſt part of the verſe, he animates his own faith, and enforces his requeſt, by calling to remembrance paſt tranſactions, and former diſplays of the power and grace of an unchangeable God. By Rahab and the dragon we are to underſtand Egypt and her king, as appears by comparing other paſſages of Scripture, particularly by Pſ. lxxxvi. 4. and Ezek. xxix. 3. the laſt of which runs thus: "Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, I am againſt "thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth "in the midſt of his rivers: which hath ſaid, my river is "mine own, and I have made it for myſelf."

In diſcourſing on this ſubject, what I propoſe, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, is,

I. To point out to you the import of this prayer in the firſt part of this paſſage, "Awake, awake, put on ſtrength, "O arm of the Lord."

II. To conſider the encouragement included in the laſt part of it, "Awake as in ancient days, in the generations "of old: art not thou it that hath cut Rahab, and wound-"ed the dragon?"

III. To apply the ſubject to our preſent ſituation.

And we are to conſider,

I. The meaning and import of the prayer: "Awake, "awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord." And in this I have no hope either of inſtructing or perſuading any but thoſe who have ſome meaſure of real religion, who do unfeignedly believe, and will, when called upon, recollect the conſtant ſuperintendency of Divine Providence. Theſe only will be ſenſible that, as every event is directed and over-ruled by the Almighty, ſo there are righteous, wiſe and gracious purpoſes to be ſerved by them. All men it is true, are ready to complain under diſtreſs. The moſt wicked and profligate, "when the waters are gone into "their ſoul," when they feel their miſery, will cry for relief. And, as they will turn them on every hand, and lay hold on every twig that may afford the leaſt proſpect of

saving them from sinking, so the terror of divine power, with which public calamity is sometimes accompanied, will even make them cry unto God. But there is a great difference, between this complaint of the miserable, and the prayer of faith, which proceeds upon just views of the nature and government of God, and is assured of success. It may sometimes please God to make use of desolating judgments or alarming public strokes to awaken a secure thoughtless generation; but dutiful, acceptable and successful prayer for their removal, can only be the work of his own children.

Perhaps it may be thought unnecessary to direct persons of this character to the proper object of their prayers, as they must be supposed habitually to flow from right principles, and to point at just and warrantable ends. But it is certain, that, when wickedness and profaneness greatly and universally prevail in any nation, the real servants of God are not only few in number, but even this little flock, always receives some degree of infection. This we are taught to expect by our blessed Saviour, who says, "And "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall "wax cold." They may both be negligent and defective in their duty, restraining prayer before God, and may be in a great measure unmindful of the great and principal views with which they ought to offer up their intercessory requests. But, hoping that all such among you as are justly liable to this charge, will discern the light, and feel the force of divine truth, it is my desire to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.

And, in general, such a petition as this, "Awake, "awake, put on strength, O arm of the lord," suggests to us, that our prayers for divine interposition and deliverance from public calamities should be supremely directed to the glory of God. This, as it is, upon the whole, the leading purpose of every real believer, so it ought to hallow every single action, and purify every particular desire. Therefore our prayers must be conceived in such a manner, and our desires after deliverance must be so qualified, that the supreme honor due to God may be preserved inviolate, that duty may maintain its precedency before inter-

eſt, and ſin may be ſtill more feared and avoided than ſuffering. The great end both of perſonal affliction, and national correction, is to weaken our attachment to preſent and temporal enjoyment, by ſtaining its glory, and convincing us of its vanity. If then our chief or only aim, in aſking deliverance from outward calamity, is that we may again recover the eaſe and quiet of ſecurity, and the pleaſure of plenty, though we may ſeem to honor God by imploring his aid, yet is our homage really given to a ſenſual idol.

That this is neither impoſſible nor unfrequent, is plain from the hiſtory of the children of Iſrael. They often applied to God in their ſtraits: "When he ſlew them, then "they ſought him, they returned and enquired early af-"ter God."*a* But this ſort of ſeeking, merely for preſent relief, or temporal mercies, was far from being acceptable to him. We are told, that it was tempting God, thus "to aſk meat for their luſt."*b* In oppoſition to this, let us look into the grounds aſſigned in Scripture for God's granting deliverance, and thence learn with what views we ought to implore it. The Pſalmiſt ſays, "Never-"theleſs he ſaved them for his name's ſake, that he might "make his mighty power to be known."*c* And the prophet Ezekiel, "But I wrought for my name's ſake, that "it ſhould not be polluted before the Heathen among "whom they were, in whoſe ſight I made myſelf known "to them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt."

But in order to illuſtrate this a little further, obſerve, that a juſt regard to the glory of God, in our prayers, implies the two following things. In the firſt place, That we expect deliverance from God alone, deſire that it may be attended with ſuch circumſtances as his hand and power may be ſeen in it, and are willing to acknowledge him as the ſupreme and only Author of it. This is plainly included in the words of the prophet, "Awake, awake, put "on ſtrength O arm of the Lord." As if he had ſaid, In thee alone is our hope; "curſed be the man that maketh "fleſh his arm." A profane irreligious people are always

a Pſal. lxxviii. 34. *b* Pſal. lxxviii. 18. *c* Pſal. cvi. 8.

prone, in undertaking any enterprize, to put their truſt in human proweſs, to glory and boaſt in the greatneſs of their ſtrength. And when they are diſappointed in their expectations, they are ready to dwell ſo much upon ſecond cauſes, that they entirely overlook, or are with great difficulty brought to acknowledge the ſupreme agency of God. We may, however be ſenſible, by his taking to himſelf ſo often, in Scripture, the title of the Lord of hoſts, "great in might and ſtrong in battle," that ſuch conduct is robbing him of the glory that is juſtly his due. Many are the warnings we have in the word of God not to place too much confidence in any human means of ſafety. "Put not your truſt in princes (ſays the Pſalmiſt) "nor in the ſon of man in whom there is no help.*a* There "is no king ſaved by the multitude of an hoſt: a mighty "man is not delivered by much ſtrength. An horſe is a "vain thing for ſafety, neither can he deliver any by his "great ſtrength."*b* And there is no Scripture truth more frequently, or more ſenſibly confirmed in the courſe of providence. How often do we find, both in former and later ages, the events of war diametrically oppoſite to the greateſt human probability, and the moſt confident human expectation?

Now prayer for divine interpoſition ſhould always be made under a deep impreſſion of this truth. And indeed we ſhall never come to importunity and fervency in prayer for ſuch a mercy, till we are ſomewhat affected with it. All the honor that is given to man is taken from God. All truſt and dependance on human means as ſuch, or on their own account, divides and weakens our reliance on God. But when he is conſidered as the ſingle and only ſource of relief, we apply with that ardor and earneſtneſs which neceſſity and extremity ſuggeſt. This doth not hinder the diligent uſe and application of outward means, but keeps them in their proper place, induces us to aſk the divine bleſſing upon them, and prevents us from provoking the divine jealouſy by idolizing and truſting in them.

a Pſ. cxlvi. 3. *b* Pſ. xxxiii. 16, 17.

It ought alſo to be our deſire, that the glory of divine power may viſibly ſhine in our deliverance; not only that his hand may do it, but that his hand may be ſeen in it, and, if poſſible, to the conviction of all. Nothing is more impious, and nothing more provoking to God, than when men arrogate to themſelves the honor of what they have done by his help, or acquired by the bounty of his providence. Here the language of the proud monarch of the eaſt, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for "the houſe of the kingdom, by the might of MY power, "and for the honor of MY majeſty?"*a* But mark the unexpected change by the more powerful word of the King of kings. "When the word was in the king's "mouth there fell a voice from heaven, ſaying, O King "Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is ſpoken, the kingdom is "departed from thee."*b* How often in Scripture is the deſtruction and puniſhment of kings and princes aſcribed to their ſelf-ſufficiency, inſolence and pride? Thus in that remarkable prophecy againſt the king of Babylon: "For thou haſt ſaid in thine heart, I will aſcend into "heaven, I will exalt my throne above the ſtars of God: "I will ſit alſo upon the mount of the congregation in "the ſides of the north. I will aſcend above the heights "of the clouds. I will be like the moſt High. Yet thou "ſhalt be brought down to hell, to the ſides of the pit. "They that ſee thee, ſhall narrowly look upon thee and "conſider thee, ſaying, Is this the man that made the "earth to tremble, that did ſhake kingdoms? That made "the world as a wilderneſs, and deſtroyed the cities there-"of; that opened not the houſe of his priſoners?"*c* How ſtrongly does this prove, that in order to pray acceptably for the interpoſition of divine Providence, we ſhould be willing that God alone ſhould have the honor entire and undivided. "That the lofty looks of man ſhould be hum-"bled, and the haughtineſs of man ſhould be bowed down, "and the Lord alone exalted in that day."*d* Was it not thus that the ancient warriors of the holy nation fought and proſpered? In confidence of divine aid, or reſigned to

a Dan. iv. 30. *b* Ver. 31. *c* Iſ. xiv. 13, 17. *d* Iſ. ii. 11.

the divine will, they went out and played the men for their people and the cities of their God. And when they had done so, they acknowledged that his right hand and his holy arm had gotten HIM the victory. See the song of Moses on his victory over the Egyptians. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right "hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy. And "in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown "them that rose up against thee: Thou sentest forth thy "wrath, which consumed them as stubble[a]."

I cannot conclude this branch of the subject without observing, that we have had in the course of Providence a very recent instance, both of a singular appearance of the hand of God in defence of a righteous cause, and a modest ascription of it to the power of the Highest. That prince, who appears now to be the chief outward support of the protestant cause in Europe, has been enabled literally (according to the ancient promise) "with five to "chase a hundred, and with a hundred to put ten thou-"sand to flight." The greatest earthly potentates had combined against him and conspired his ruin. Assured of victory, they were forging chains for his followers, and dividing his inheritance by lot. But in the name of the Lord he set up his standard. The Lord turned the counsels of his enemies into confusion. His victories have been numerous, extraordinary and important. And he hath all along avoided boasting and vain-glory, and piously acknowledged that "Salvation belongeth unto God."

In the second place, in applying to God for an extraordinary interposition of his providence, we ought also to pray for a dispensation of his grace and mercy. When we pray that the arm of the Lord may awake and put on strength, it should be that a revival of religion may accompany temporal relief, and that by a plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit many sinners may be delivered from the worst of bondage, and brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God. As this should be in itself the

[a] Ex. xv. 6, 7.

object of our desire, so it should be inseparably joined with the other, and their mutual connexion still kept in view. Temporal mercies to a nation, as well as to particular persons, ought always to be made subservient to the promoting of truth and righteousness. It is remarkable, that these two things are always joined in Scripture. And, indeed, if temporal mercies be considered in the light I formerly mentioned, it is impossible that they can be asunder. Let any one consult the intercessory prayers in which deliverance from external calamity is intreated, the prophecies in which it is promised, or the songs of praise in which it is celebrated, and he will find, that the purity and spiritual prosperity of God's heritage is still kept in view. They are considered as involved in one another, and the one, as only valuable, because leading to the other. Instead of enumerating many passages, I shall only mention one of the prophet Isaiah. "And I "will turn mine hand upon thee, and purely purge away "all thy dross and take away all thy tin. And I will re- "store thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as "at the beginning: Afterward thou shalt be called the "city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be "redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righte- "ousness."

And, my brethren, is not the arm of the Lord and the glory of his power particularly displayed, when the influence and dominion of error is destroyed, and the obstinacy and rebellion of sinners is subdued? This is a more extraordinary, as well as a more excellent effect of power, than producing the greatest changes in our outward state and condition. It seems to be on this account that, in Scripture, the Saviour of sinners, the king of Zion, is so often represented as glorious in his person, and great in his power, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son "is given, and the government shall be upon his shoul- "der, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsel- "lor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince "of peace.*a* Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most

a Isaiah, ix. 6.

" Mighty: with thy glory and thy majeſty. And in thy " majeſty ride proſperouſly, becauſe of truth and meek- " neſs and righteouſneſs; and thy right hand ſhall teach " thee terrible things."*a* Theſe and a multitude of other paſſages plainly ſhow that the converſion of ſinners, and defeating the powers of the princes of darkneſs, require an exertion, and is a ſignal diſplay of the ſtrength of the divine arms.

But as it is a matter of the utmoſt importance and propriety at preſent, I muſt beg your patience, while I endeavor a little to illuſtrate the neceſſity of joining earneſt interceſſion for the revival of religion and the glory of Chriſt's kingdom, with our prayers for a recovery of national proſperity.

For illuſtrating this let us attend to the three following particulars.

1. We have no warrant to aſk the laſt of theſe without the firſt.

2. We have no reaſon to expect that it will be ſeparately beſtowed.

3. If it ſhould, in any degree, it would not be a bleſſing but a curſe.

Firſt, we have no warrant to aſk national proſperity without a revival of religion. Our prayers are then only warrantable when we adjuſt and proportion our eſteem of the mercies of God to their real worth, and deſire them for their proper ends. Now, a love to one's country, and a deſire of its outward welfare, is, no doubt, an excellent and an amiable diſpoſition. But it is much more ſo to be concerned for their everlaſting intereſt. Why doth the love of our country merit any praiſe, but becauſe it is a diſpoſition and tendency to communicate happineſs? But what is temporal to eternal happineſs? What is a fruitful field to a renewed heart? Peace at home to peace with God? Security from an earthly oppreſſor, to deliverance from the wrath to come? A compaſſionate heart bleeds for the miſery of his fellow-creatures in poverty or bondage; but a ſanctified heart is ſtill more deeply affected with the

a Pſa. xlv. 3, 4.

ignorance and guilt of others, and their endless consequences. Now is it a warrantable manner of offering up our desires to God, to admire or ask a share in the bounty of his providence, while we despise and trample upon the riches of his grace?

But that such prayers are unwarrantable, doth not only appear from the unjust preference given to lesser before greater mercies, but from their being a total perversion of our desires from the great point in which they ought to centre. The gifts of God are intended to lead us to the giver; the events of his providence to be subservient to the methods of his grace. When, therefore, we ask temporal prosperity, without an equal, or rather superior solicitude for the enlightening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost, we are alienating his mercies from their proper use, turning them into weapons of rebellion against him, and cherishing that love of the world which is destructive of the love of God.

Secondly, As all such desires are unwarrantable and disorderly, so we have no reason to expect that they shall be granted. Let us recall to mind this important truth, that God is the supreme Disposer of all events. Every prosperous event is the effect of his bounty. Every calamity is the rod of his anger, and carries his commission. Are there not then wise ends to be served by every thing appointed by him? Affliction springeth not out of the dust. National calamity is not the rigor of an arbitrary tyrant, but the wise chastisement of a gracious father, or the punishment of a righteous judge. He ruleth the nations "fitting upon the throne of his holiness;" and unless when he hath a mind to "make a full end," of a people ripe for destruction, gives them for a season into the hands of their enemies to bring about their reformation. If then public calamity bears a commission for this purpose from him whose work is perfect, what reason is there to expect, that it will be removed before it hath attained its end? Will he not repeat the stroke, and increase its severity, till it procure submission? It is true, we cannot precisely say how far the forbearance of God may go, or how long his patience may endure. There may be a remission, or

ſuſpenſion of the final ſtroke, for their farther trial. But it is certain that when there is no returning to God by repentance, there can be no reaſonable ground to hope that his diſpleaſure will ceaſe, or its effects be removed.

Thirdly, Though temporal deliverance were granted to a nation, in any meaſure, without a diſpenſation of the Spirit and revival of religion, it would be no bleſſing but a curſe, and could not be of any long duration. It would be giving them up to themſelves, to fill up the meaſure of their iniquities, that, when the appointed time of vengeance ſhould come, their deſtruction might be more terrible and ſignal. It is remarkable, that this is found among the *judgments* of God, and reckoned one of the moſt dreadful, when he ceaſes to ſtrive with a people, and gives them up to themſelves. Thus he ſays, by the Pſalmiſt, "But my people would not hearken to my voice, "Iſrael would have none of me, ſo I gave them up to "their own hearts luſts, and they walked in their own "counſels."*a* So alſo ſaith the prophet Hoſea, "Ephraim "is joined to idols, let him alone."*b* The conſequence of this is the continuance and increaſe of all manner of wickedneſs. Then ſpiritual judgments come in the room of temporal, which, though they are leſs ſenſible, are but ſo much the more fatal. Blindneſs of mind, hardneſs of heart, and an obſtinate contempt of inſtruction, are the uſual conſequences of unſanctified proſperity. In ſuch circumſtances a nation may exult, and bleſs themſelves in their abundant wealth; nay, they may be the envy of their fooliſh and ſhort-ſighted neighbors; but to the eye of faith their condition is moſt wretched and deplorable. To what a pitch of impiety they may proceed when all reſtraints are withdrawn, ſome nations recorded in hiſtory are a ſtanding and melancholy proof. And the ſudden deſolation ſometimes inflicted, after long forbearance, by the Lord of nature, on cities and kingdoms, by fire from heaven, by earthquakes, peſtilence, or the ſword, is a fearful preſage of the fate of all, who, in the day of recompence, ſhall ſuffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

a Pſal. lxxxi. 11, 12. *b* Hoſ. iv. 17.

All these things are plainly founded on the word of God, and manifest consequences of the divine government. They will, however, make very little impression on a thoughtless and secure generation, plunged in sensuality and lust; and least of all on those, who have expressly lifted themselves under the banner of infidelity, and learned to be profane upon principle. This is one of the worst symptoms of our present condition; the greater our guilt, and, therefore, the nearer the danger. Nothing was less looked for by the Babylonian monarch, in the height of his riotous midnight feast, than his kingdom's being taken from him. And yet how speedily was it accomplished, and in how short a time was this superb and opulent city, the "beauty of the Chaldees excellency," turned into a ruinous heap?*a*

I proceed now to the second general head, which was:

II. To consider a little the encouragement to prayer, contained in the last part of the text: "Awake as in the "ancient days, as in the generations of old," &c.

In this the prophet animates his faith, and encourages his own dependance and that of others upon the promises of God, by celebrating the greatness of his power, as manifested in former memorable deliverances granted to his chosen people. He continues his address to the arm of the Lord: and, instead of an enumeration of the mighty acts of this arm in ancient days, and the generations of old, he fixes upon one signal and leading display of divine majesty and power, in the destruction of the Egyptians, and the deliverance of Israel from that subjection and bondage in which they were formerly held by that people. This is done with the highest propriety; for the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage was most remarkable and extraordinary in its circumstances, and the hand of God did most eminently appear in it. Thus the prophet says, in the verse immediately following the text: "Art not thou it, which hath dried the sea, the waters of "the great deep, that hath made the deeps of the sea a way "for the ransomed to pass over?" From this appearance

a See Isaiah xiii. 21, to the end.

in behalf of Iſrael, God often takes his deſignation: this chiefly conſtituted the ſpecial relation between him and the people of Iſrael; and on this their obligation to obedience is founded in the preface or introduction to the moral law; "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee "out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage." And indeed this deliverance is often conſidered and juſtly, as typical of the ſtill more important deliverance of the elect of God from ſin and miſery.

Now let us conſider a little the effect of ſuch a view upon the mind, and its influence in prayer. This, I think may be included in the two following particulars:

Firſt, it ſatisfies us of the power of God, and his ability to ſave. There can be no prayer addreſſed to God for relief and deliverance in an acceptable manner, but what proceeds upon a confidence in his power. And there is in men, for the moſt part, on this ſubject a very imperfect and wavering perſuaſion. Nay, there is often a greater degree of unbelief, than they themſelves are ſenſible of, or diſtinctly apprehend. They are often ſo held captive by ſenſe, and their attention ſo much taken up and engroſſed by outward means and inſtruments, that they are backward to believe, or rely even on an almighty, becauſe an inviſible power. This was the caſe often with the children of Iſrael, even after repeated proofs of the ſtrength of the divine arm. Thus ſays the Pſalmiſt: "How oft did "they provoke him in the wilderneſs, and grieve him in "the deſart? Yea, they turned back and tempted God, "and limited the holy One of Iſrael. They remembered "not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from "the enemy."*a* Againſt this unhappy tendency, God, by the prophet, warns his people, a few verſes after the text: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you; who art "thou, that thou ſhouldſt be afraid of a man that ſhall die, "and of the ſon of man which ſhall be made as graſs? "And forgetteth the Lord thy Maker, that hath ſtretched "forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? "And haſt feared continually every day, becauſe of the

a Pſal. lxxviii. 40, 41, 42.

" fury of the oppreſſor, as if he were ready to deſtroy; and " where is the fury of the oppreſſor?"*a* And indeed nothing can be more ſupporting under ſuch fears, than to remember the inſtances in which God hath formerly made his power known. It is, as it were, realizing the divine perfections, and making us to ſee him who is inviſible. In this very way does the Pſalmiſt recover from a diſconſolate ſtate, and dark diſcouraging views of divine providence. " Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger " ſhut up his tender mercies? Selah. And I ſaid, this is " my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right " hand of the moſt High. I will remember the works " of the Lord; ſurely I will remember thy wonders of " old, I will meditate alſo of all thy works and talk of thy " doings."*b*

In the ſecond place, the ſame view ſerves to aſcertain us of the mercy of God, and his readineſs to help us in diſtreſs. It is not enough that we have ever ſo unſhaken a perſuaſion of the power of God, unleſs we have ſome ground to believe that it ſhall appear in our behalf. Now former inſtances of extraordinary providential deliverance not only afford a proof of divine power, but ſhew us in what caſes we have reaſon to expect that it ſhall be exerted. That part of the providence of God which is already open to our view, enables us, from analogy, to infer what ſhall be his ſubſequent conduct; at leaſt ſo far as to direct and encourage us in our own duty. We know for example, that he is a refuge in times of trouble to thoſe that are in diſtreſs: and that in extremity, when all human help fails, then is deliverance more to the glory of God. By this very argument does Jehoſhaphat conclude and enforce his prayer. " O our God, wilt thou not judge " them? for we have no might againſt this great company " that cometh againſt us; neither know we what to do, " but our eyes are upon thee."*c*

We know alſo that his faithfulneſs is engaged to hear thoſe, who, refuſing to lean on any broken reed, or truſting any refuge of lies, place their confidence in him a-

a Iſa. li. 12, 13. *b* Pſal. lxxvii. 9, 10, 11, 12. *c* 2 Chron. xx. 12.

lone; and that the glory of God is immediately and chiefly concerned, in the ſupport and preſervation of his own people. They ſee that he hath, in all ages, counted this his own cauſe; and therefore they ſay with the Pſalmiſt; "They that know thy name will put their truſt in thee, "for thou Lord haſt not forſaken them that ſeek thee."*a* In fine, former inſtances of extraordinary deliverance point out the great end and deſign of ſuch interpoſitions. That they are for promoting of truth and righteouſneſs, and to make thoſe who are the objects of them, chearful and willing ſervants to God; not only partakers of the bounty of his providence, but monuments of the riches of his grace. "In that day ſhall this ſong be ſung in the land "of Judah. We have a ſtrong city, ſalvation will God "appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, "that the righteous nation, that keepeth the truth may en-"ter in.*b* Violence ſhall no more be heard in thy land, "waſting and deſtruction within thy borders; but thou "ſhalt call thy walls ſalvation and thy gates praiſe."*c* From all which it appears that, in prayer properly warranted, and rightly directed, it muſt give unſpeakable confidence and hope, to ſurvey the remarkable inſtances of divine providence, and thence take encouragement to commit our cauſe to, and reſt our hope on, the ſame unchangeable God.

I conclude this head with obſerving, That in the expreſſion of the prophet, "Art thou not it that hath cut "Rahab and wounded the dragon," he hath a particular view to the eternity and immutability of God. "He is "the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and forever." If he hath done great and marvellous things in the moſt diſtant ages, "his hand is not ſhortened that it cannot ſave, neither his "ear heavy that it cannot hear;" his ſtrength is not impaired by exerciſe, nor his fulneſs waſted by communication. Such an argument would not hold with regard to man, whoſe power is ſo exceeding mutable, and his ſtrength ſo exceeding liable to decay. It is recorded in hiſtory, that an old Roman, Milo, who in his youth was a

a Pſ. ix. 10. *b* Iſ. xxvi. 1, 2. *c* Iſ. lx. 18.

prodigy of ſtrength, happened to live to old age; and that he uſed often to weep when he looked on his arms, his once nervous and vigorous arms, and ſaw the wrinkled and decayed ſinews, and the weak, feeble ſtate to which they were reduced by time. But this is not, cannot be the caſe with the arm of the Lord. His ſtrength and ſtability, particularly as oppoſed to created weakneſs and frailty, is often declared in Scripture. Thus in the following ſublime paſſage of the prophet Iſaiah. "And the "voice ſaid, Cry. And he ſaid what ſhall I cry? All "fleſh is graſs, and all the goodlineſs thereof is as the flow-"er of the field. The graſs withereth, the flower fadeth; "becauſe the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: ſurely "the people is graſs. The graſs withereth, the flower fa-"deth: but the word our God ſhall ſtand forever."*a*

I proceed now in the laſt place to apply the truths you have heard on this ſubject to our own preſent ſituation, as to public affairs.

And firſt. Is not our ſtate, both as a nation, and as a church, exceedingly fallen and low: and have we not the greateſt need to addreſs this prayer in the text, "Awake, "awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord?" May we not take our low and fallen ſtate as a nation from the univerſal confeſſion of all without exception, however oppoſed in ſentiments or intereſt? Every claſs and denomination of men among us, every party and faction, however unwilling each may be to acknowledge its own ſhare of the guilt, and however prone to load its adverſaries with the blame of procuring it, is yet willing to acknowledge that we are at preſent in a diſtreſſed, and in a contemptible ſtate.

And indeed the thing itſelf ſpeaks. We have of late ſuffered under a variety of public ſtrokes. We have not only had, for ſome time paſt, repeated threatenings of ſcarcity and dearth, but vaſt multitudes have been afflicted with famine in its rigor, which is one of God's "ſore "judgments." Through the mercy of God this is alleviated in ſome meaſure at preſent, but far from being entire-

a Iſ. xl. 6.

ly removed. We have alſo been long engaged in war with a powerful and politic enemy. And has not the providence of God ſenſibly frowned on us, and viſibly fruſtrated almoſt every one of our attempts? This hath been the caſe to a degree hardly known in any former inſtance. We have "turned our backs faint-hearted before our ene-"mies," in almoſt every encounter; and the greater and more formidable our preparations for any enterprize, the more pitiful the iſſue, and the more ſhameful our defeat and diſappointment. Has there not been an obſtructed trade, a loſs of territory, a loſs of honor, and expence of treaſure? Is not this nation, once in a manner the arbitreſs of the fate of Europe, now become the ſcorn and deriſion of her neighbours and all that are round about her? What weak and divided councils among thoſe that preſide? Inſtead of any genuine public ſpirit, a proud and factious endeavor to diſgrace each other's meaſures, and wreſt the enſigns of government out of each other's hands. How numerous and expenſive, but how uſeleſs and inactive, have been our fleets and armies? And how deplorable is the condition of our colonies abroad? They are the chief theatre of the war, becauſe, indeed, they are the ſubject of the conteſt. And ſurely it is affecting to think of the unnatural barbarity and cruelty that there is often exerciſed, when no age or ſex is ſpared. It is true, the diſtance of the place may probably make us leſs ſenſible of their miſery. But if it pleaſe God to ſuffer our enemies to continue their progreſs, it is hard to ſay how far the deſolation may extend, or how univerſal it may prove.

Are we not alſo in a very low and fallen ſtate as a church, or a nation, ſtill retaining ſome profeſſion and form of religion? This will be found to correſpond with the other, as the cauſe with the effect. How have all ranks, from the higheſt to the loweſt, corrupted their ways? How groſs and prevalent is infidelity, undermining the principles of natural, with the ſame zeal and eagerneſs, with which it formerly endeavored to weaken the foundations of revealed religion? How many of high rank have wholly deſerted the houſe and worſhip of God, nay, openly and boldly treat his ſervice and ſervants with

contempt? How often do we obſerve ſuch, with a criminal and inſolent ſelf-contradiction, trample upon the very laws againſt profaneneſs which they contribute to make? And, with how much zeal and diligence does the lower part of the nation emulate the higher, in that which is the reproach of both? So great is the prevalence of irreligion, contempt of God, ſenſuality and pride, that many of the groſſeſt crimes are not only practiſed but profeſſed, not only frequent but open, not only perſiſted in but gloried in and boaſted of: inſomuch, that it requires no ſmall degree of fortitude and reſolution, ſtedfaſtly to adhere to the principles and character of a diſciple of Chriſt, in oppoſition to the ſpirit and ſtrain of faſhionable converſation.

It is not, indeed, to be wondered at, that not only this nation, but the proteſtant ſtates of Europe in general ſhould be brought under the rod, as they have ſo ſhamefully departed from that purity of faith and ſtrictneſs of morals which was the glory of the reformation. How many have of late been aſhamed of the croſs of Chriſt, and the doctrine of the grace of God? And what hath been ſubſtituted in their room? A pliant and faſhionable ſcheme of religion, a fine theory of virtue and morality. A beautiful but unſubſtantial idol, raiſed by human pride, adorned and dreſſed by human art, and ſupported by the wiſdom of words. And hath it not, in this, as in every preceding age, in this, as in every other chriſtian country, whenever it gained any credit, been the fore-runner and brought faſt at its heels a deluge of profaneneſs and immorality in practice? Can any of theſe things be called in queſtion? And are not they, as well as many more which might eaſily be enumerated, the melancholy proofs of our degenerate and corrupt character?

In the ſecond place. From what hath been ſaid you may ſee what wrong meaſures we have hitherto taken for removing theſe evils, ſo far as we have been ſenſible of them. Our gracious ſovereign hath, indeed, been pleaſed to point out our duty, by calling us annually to faſting and humiliation. But with the far greater number it hath been no more than an unmeaning and lifeleſs form: and

they have continued ſtill in the ſame forgetfulneſs and contempt of God. You have heard above that nothing is more contrary to the genuine ſpirit of interceſſory prayer in public calamity, than putting truſt in an arm of fleſh. And yet, is there any thing with which this nation is at preſent more juſtly chargeable? Nothing is more apparent from the very face of our common channels of intelligence. In the caſe of diſappointments, on the one hand, are we not ungovernable and head-ſtrong in our reſentment againſt men? and equally fooliſh and ſanguine on the other, in our hopes of thoſe who are ſubſtituted in their place? We give pompous details of armaments, and propheſy, nay, even in a manner deſcribe their victories, long before the ſeaſon of action; and incautiouſly celebrate the characters of leaders, while they are only putting on the harneſs, and going into the field. What proud and arrogant ſentiments do we often expreſs on the ſubject of our national courage, and ancient Britiſh fire, as it is called? In ſhort, we ſeem to have got entirely into that vain-glorious, oſtentatious ſyſtem, with which we uſed to upbraid our neighbor and rival nation; and they ſeem to have given it up in our favor, and to have adopted the wiſer and more profitable method, of putting deeds for words.

And how negligent have we been of promoting, or praying for the intereſt of religion? You have heard, that when the arm of the Lord puts on ſtrength, it muſt be to appoint ſalvation for walls and bulwarks to a people. But how few diſcover any concern upon this ſubject? The want of public ſpirit, in thoſe who retain any ſenſe of religion, is an evidence of its low and languiſhing ſtate. When it is lively, it will always be communicative. Love to God and love to man, the two great branches of practical religion, neceſſarily imply a concern for its progreſs. And yet, ſo rare is any thing of this kind, that when it appears as a ſort of prodigy, it is looked upon, by moſt, as romance and extravagance. Let experience tell, if this is not often the caſe. When any one appears, in imitation of the Scripture ſaints, to grieve for the ſins of others, or diſcovers any more than ordinary concern for their refor-

mation, are not all his endeavors immediately reſiſted and reſented as troubleſome, or branded with every name of contempt, as viſionary frenzy and enthuſiaſm?

In the third place. From what hath been ſaid on this ſubject, you may learn what ought to be the great aim of every ſerious and ſenſible Chriſtian among us, at preſent in his interceſſion at the throne of grace, viz. That the power of the Almighty may appear in behalf of this nation, in ſuch a manner, as all may be obliged to ſay, "This is the doing of the Lord." That, as he uſeth to do on extraordinary occaſions, he may raiſe up inſtruments for this purpoſe, who may be as poliſhed ſhafts in his own hand, and may have a ſingle eye to his own glory. That not for our ſakes, who have deſerved to be caſt off for ever, but for his own name's ſake, he would ſupport thoſe who ſtill adhere to the proteſtant cauſe. And, in a particular manner, for this end, that he would diſcover his power and glory in an eminent and remarkable revival of religion among all ranks. That our bleſſed Redeemer, the king of Zion, who reigns to all generations, who hath aſcended up on high, and received gifts for men, would ſend forth his Spirit in a large and plentiful meaſure. That his work and power may appear in all his gracious influences, convincing and converting ſinners, ſanctifying, quickening and comforting believers. That this may be a common bleſſing on all corners of the land, on perſons of every claſs and denomination, of every rank and degree, from the higheſt to the loweſt, of every ſtation and office, civil and ſacred. Above all, that he would "cloath his "prieſts with ſalvation, that his ſaints may ſhout aloud "for joy." O when ſhall the time come, when "the "Lord of hoſts ſhall be for a crown of glory, and a diadem "of beauty to the reſidue of his people;" when, inſtead of fine ſchemes ſpun for the honor of their makers, thoſe who are called miniſters of Chriſt, ſhall preach the goſpel, "with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from Heaven?" When the truth of God, by its ſimplicity, majeſty, force, and efficacy, ſhall make its way into the hearts of the moſt obſtinate, and Satan's kingdom fall as lightning before it. Plead, my beloved hearers, that proteſtants in general

may be brought back to their firſt faith and their firſt love; that the unhappy diviſions among us may be aboliſhed; and that the bond and centre of union may be Chriſt crucified, the only author of ſalvation: that men may be no longer ranked in parties and marſhalled under names, but the great and only ſtrife may be, who ſhall love our Redeemer moſt, and who ſhall ſerve him with the greateſt zeal.

And in this critical conjuncture, when the bloody ſword is threatening ſo many nations, and when there is ſo general a combination of anti-chriſtian powers, be earneſt in prayer, that it may pleaſe God to ſubvert their ſchemes, and turn their counſels into fooliſhneſs; and that he, with whom is terrible majeſty, may conſume "the man of ſin with the ſpirit of his mouth, and deſtroy "him with the brightneſs of his coming."—Pray for our gracious ſovereign king George, under whoſe mild and legal government, we have long enjoyed as much happineſs as our national guilt would allow: that God, by whom "kings reign and princes decree juſtice," would give him a wiſe underſtanding heart in his fear, protect his perſon, direct his councils, and proſper his arms: and long preſerve his numerous iſſue, as happy pledges of the ſecurity of our civil and religious liberty. Let us alſo, while we give thanks to God for raiſing up an eminent prince in Germany as the head of the reformed intereſt, and ſignally ſupporting him hitherto, pray, that he may continue his protection to him, encourage his heart, and ſtrengthen his hands, and fight his battles. In fine, let us pray for the ſpeedy accompliſhment of the prophecy, whoever ſhall be the inſtrument of it, of the downfall of Antichriſt, when the cry ſhall be heard, "Ba-"bylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and ſhall ariſe no "more."

In the laſt place. For our encouragement in this duty, let us remember, that we ſerve an unchangeable God, the rock of ages. We pray for the appearance of the arm of the Lord "as in ancient days, in the generations of "old," when it "cut Rahab and wounded the dragon." Review the hiſtory of his conduct to the church and peo-

ple of Iſrael, how, with a mighty hand and out-ſtretched arm, he delivered them from bondage, and humbled their proud oppreſſors. And remember how often, in ſucceeding ages, he has appeared in behalf of his own people, and ſupported his own cauſe when at the very loweſt, and as it were in an expiring ſtate. How low was the intereſt of Zion at the reformation, when all the kings of the earth ſerved the "ſcarlet whore," and "were drunk with "the wine of the wrath of her fornication?" How thick the darkneſs that overſpread the nations, and how univerſal the dominion of error? And yet, in oppoſition to all the cunning of earthly policy, in oppoſition to all the fury of perſecuting cruelty, he enabled a few plain men, lovers of the truth, to aſſert, to defend and to ſpread it.

The moſt remarkable times of the revival of religion, in this part of the united kingdom, immediately ſucceeded times of the greateſt apoſtacy, when truth ſeemed to be fallen in the ſtreets, and equity could not enter. This was the caſe immediately before the year 1638. Corruption in doctrine, looſneſs in practice, and ſlaviſh ſubmiſſion in politics, had overſpread the church of Scotland. And yet, in a little time, ſhe appeared in greater purity, and in greater dignity, than ever ſhe had done before, or perhaps than ever ſhe hath done ſince, that period. In the ſame manner, immediately before the happy revolution, how deſperate in appearance was the ſituation of this church? When all the beſt, as well as many of the nobleſt perſons in the nation, were chaſed as fugitives from their dwellings, and conſidered as unworthy of an abode on earth! When many of our worthy anceſtors fell in battle, died on a ſcaffold, or were murdered in the fields by the unrelenting rage of eccleſiaſtic tyranny. And when worſhipping the Lord God of our fathers, according to his own word, was a capital crime! Yet our captivity was brought back, and "we were as men that dreamed," ſo unexpected was the mercy.

Let no Chriſtian therefore give way to deſponding thoughts. Though infidelity unreſiſted ſpreads its poiſon, though profaneneſs and enmity to religion and ſerioufneſs every where abound, though there are few to ſupport the in-

tereſt of truth and righteouſneſs, though we have ſeen a new thing on the earth, a miniſter of Chriſt leaving the pulpit for the ſtage, let us not be diſcouraged. We plead the cauſe that ſhall finally prevail. Religion ſhall riſe from its ruins; and its oppreſſed ſtate at preſent ſhould not only excite us to pray, but encourage us to hope for its ſpeedy revival. While every one is diligent in his own ſphere, and in his proper duty, and earneſtly pleading for the revelation of the arm of the Lord, let us recollect his favor and protection to the church in every time of need, and his faithfulneſs which is to all generations. Let us ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "Walk about Zion, and go round "about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her "bulwarks, conſider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the "generation following. For this God is our God for ever "and ever, he will be our guide even unto death."*a*

a Pſalm xlviii. 12, 13, 14.

SEASONABLE ADVICE TO YOUNG PERSONS.

SERMON 41.

PSALM i. 1.

Preached at the Laigh Church of PAISLEY, on Sabbath, February 21ſt, 1762.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

An Authentic Narrative, of the disorderly and riotous meeting, on the Night before the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in that place, which gave occasion to the Discourse.

TO

ROBERT FULTON, Esq. }
CHARLES MAXWELL, } Bailies.
WILLIAM ORR, }
ANDREW SMITH, Treasurer.
And the remanent members of the Town-Council of PAISLEY,

The following Sermon is humbly inscribed, by their

Most Obedient

Humble Servant,

JOHN WITHERSPOON.

TO THE

PUBLIC.

THE publication of the following ſermon, is not owing to choice, but neceſſity. A proceſs of ſcandal was carried on againſt the perſons who gave occaſion to its being preached; and they, inſtead of any ſubmiſſion or penitence, thought proper to make heavy complaints againſt the author of the ſermon; and to give an account of what was ſaid in it, very imperfect and unjuſt, as may well be ſuppoſed. In anſwer to this, he found it neceſſary to declare his willingneſs and reſolution to publiſh the ſermon, and to prefix a diſtinct narration of the proceedings, ſo far as they had come to light, of that impious aſſembly, held within the bounds of his charge, that the public might judge whether there was not more than ſufficient cauſe given for what was then ſaid. By the following narrative and ſermon he now propoſes to acquit himſelf of both parts of this promiſe.

On Saturday the 6th of February, 1762, being the day before the celebration of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper in Paiſley, ſome young men, who it is generally believed had all been at church, dined immediately after ſermon in James Chambers's room. After dinner, Robert Hunter, who never was a communicant, produced one of the church tokens, well knowing what uſe it was intended to ſerve. Being aſked where he got it, ſaid he got it from Judas Iſcariot; and, as one of the company declares, offered to play odds or evens with him which of them ſhould uſe it. They were then invited all to a glaſs in William Wilſon's room, which he choſe that night to take poſſeſſion of; and indeed to give it a very dreadful

conſecration. In the interval of their meeting, Robert Hunter ſent the token to a young woman in the place, incloſed in a letter. What were the contents of the letter cannot be known. Common fame ſaid it was inviting her to their ſacrament: he himſelf pretended it was very innocent, but took care, as ſoon as the rumour broke out, to get the letter and burn it. The reader will immediately reflect what could be the intention, and what might have been the effects of this conduct: it was eaſy in this way, to ſend the moſt notorious profligate to the table of the Lord, to the unſpeakable ſcandal of the congregation, as well as miſchief to his own ſoul.

About ſix of the clock the ſame evening, or ſoon after, there met according to appointment in William Wilſon's room, the ſaid Robert Hunter, and William Wilſon, manufacturers in Paiſley, John Snodgraſs, writer there, William M'Crotchet, enſign or ſerjeant in the army, James and David Chalmers, and Robert Croſs junior, merchants in Paiſley. By their own confeſſion, and the depoſition of ſeveral witneſſes, they employed a good part of the time in mock-preaching, and that not merely imitating the tones or geſtures of miniſters in indifferent words, but the only expreſſions that were diſtinguiſhed by the witneſſes who heard them on the ſtreet, were the words of ſcripture. Two witneſſes depone, that to the beſt of their judgment, they heard them praying in mockery; and when aſked if they were ſure it was praying and not preaching, perſiſted in affirming it was praying. The only uncertainty this evidence labors under, is, that not hearing the particular words uſed, the only way by which they diſtinguiſhed it, was by the ſound; but it is to be obſerved, that both witneſſes were poſitive; that they agreed together as to the time when this happened, and that it was not the ſame time that the other witneſſes depone they were preaching, but at a very conſiderable diſtance; ſo that there is little probability of the one being miſtaken for the other. By their own confeſſions, and the depoſitions of witneſſes, they were guilty of profane ſwearing. The noiſe of their meeting was ſuch, as alarmed the whole neighborhood; but what is moſt tremendous of all, by the declaration of

Robert Hunter, one of themſelves, William M'Crotchet, uſed ſome of the words of the inſtitution. The ſame thing is declared by William Wilſon, of John Snodgraſs; and upon the ſtricteſt re-examination he perſiſted in declaring that he was certain it was done in the company, and he thought it was by that perſon.

When theſe facts are laid together, and all the circumſtances of the tranſaction are weighed, is it poſſible in words to paint the atrociouſneſs of their crime? Is there any ground to wonder at the greatneſs of the ſcandal? Is there reaſon to complain that the miniſter in whoſe bounds the offence was committed, and under whoſe charge almoſt all the offenders live, ſhould think of preaching on ſuch a ſubject as it appears he did; and now with concern finds himſelf obliged to publiſh? The very choice of ſuch a night for ſuch a merry meeting, and the diſturbance given to the place almoſt to the hour of midnight, though there had been no more in it, were ſurely highly indecent. But when we add to this the loud profanation of the Almighty's name, and ſpending the moſt part, if not the whole of the time, in mocking the exerciſes of piety, how deep and aggravated is the guilt! Above all, when it is conſidered that this ſeems to have been without bounds, not ſparing even the moſt ſolemn and ſacred rite of our holy religion! It is true, ſome of them obſtinately deny this laſt, and heavieſt part of the charge. It doth not indeed appear, and we hope it is not true, that there was a formal celebration, and general or common participation in mockery, of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper; but if there had been no profane alluſion to it in the performances of the acting mimics, it is not to be ſuppoſed or imagined, that it would have been confeſſed by two of the perſons preſent. Though this ſhould not militate againſt the reſt, it certainly muſt militate againſt themſelves. The time of the meeting; the token produced before it; the letter with the token ſent; the other things which they certainly did; and the unſuſpected declaration of two of the guilty; who ſeemed at firſt penitent, though afterwards they altered their conduct, and joined with the reſt in a common defence; are ſo ſtrong, that it is

impoſſible to deſtroy the belief of it in an impartial mind; the rather when we add, that afterwards David Chalmers confeſſed it ſtill more fully than any of the other two. This, though it was too late to be in the proceſs, or rather by great art and influence kept out of it, may be ſafely affirmed, becauſe it was in the preſence of three perſons. But to cut the matter ſhort, the uſe of ſome of the words of the inſtitution with a ſolemn air as of a miniſter, and alſo ſome of the other words of ſcripture, is affirmed by William Wilſon, of John Snodgraſs, in a voluntary declaration, when he was not adduced as an evidence. Let John Snodgraſs therefore, who conſiders this as ſo injurious to him, proſecute William Wilſon for ſlander, and get him puniſhed in the manner he juſtly deſerves, if it be falſe; and if this is not done, he muſt forgive many, and particularly the author of the following ſermon, for believing it to be true.

SEASONABLE ADVICE TO YOUNG PERSONS.

SERMON 41.

PSALM i. 1.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

THERE is an old and beaten obſervation, that human nature, in all ages, is the ſame. To this I add, or rather offer, by way of illuſtration of it, that ſin, which bears ſo much ſway in human characters and actions, has been the ſame, in its operation and influence, in all ages, ſince the fall of Adam. For this reaſon the characters drawn in the holy ſcriptures, and particularly the obſervations on human life, contained in the Pſalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, and book of Eccleſiaſtes, are as perfectly adapted to the preſent age, as if they were but of yeſterday's date.

As the ten commandments, which are the ſum of the moral law, conſiſt moſtly of prohibitions, the Pſalmiſt, in this paſſage, draws the character of the good man in a negative form, by its oppoſition to the bad. At the ſame time, the danger to which the unwary are expoſed, the enticing and deceitful nature of ſin, and its monſtrous enormity, when arrived at its full height, are couched in the moſt admirable manner: "Bleſſed is the man that walk-

" eth not in the counſel of the ungodly;—nor ſtandeth in " the way of ſinners;—nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcorn- " ful."

It is not agreed among interpreters, who was the author of this Pſalm; and, indeed, it is a matter more of curioſity than moment, very critically to inquire. Some think it was the Pſalmiſt David, becauſe of the high eſteem expreſſed in it for the law of God, a thing which ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhes his other writings. Others refer it to a later period; and ſuppoſe that Ezra, or ſome other after the captivity, who collected the ſacred hymns of different authors into one volume, prefixed this as a ſort of argument or preface to the whole. It is, indeed, a ſummary of all that follow. It plainly contains a character both of good men and bad; the uſual courſe of divine Providence towards each of theſe claſſes, as well as the final iſſue of their conduct, in the everlaſting happineſs of the one, and the everlaſting miſery of the other.

Even the moſt curſory reader muſt obſerve, that there is a gradation in the expreſſions of the text, which riſe one above another in their ſtrength and energy: nay, it is the opinion of many, that they are choſen with peculiar art, and contain a double, if not a threefold gradation.

1. In the character, beginning with the *ungodly*, who are without proper impreſſions of religion, and habitually governed by other principles than the fear of God. Next, *ſinners*, or thoſe who are more openly flagitious, and viſibly guilty of groſs crimes. And finally, the *ſcornful*, who ſet reproof at defiance, and treat every thing ſerious and ſacred with contempt and diſdain.

2. In the communication of others with them, *walking;* which ſeems to imply occaſional, unforeſeen, and tranſient intercourſe;—*ſtanding*, which ſeems to indicate a greater degree of approbation and voluntary compliance with their example;—and *ſitting*, which ſignifies being fixed and ſettled in an evil courſe, and refuſing to depart from it.——To this ſome add the other expreſſions, the *counſel*, the *way*, a nd the *ſeat;* on which I forbear to inſiſt, but proceed to obſerve,

That we have, in this paſſage, a moſt uſeful and inſtructive leſſon of great moment in every place and age; and peculiarly ſuited, on ſeveral accounts, to the preſent circumſtances of this congregation. It is, therefore my reſolution to diſcourſe a little, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, on the three diſtinct branches into which it may be naturally divided.

I. The infectious nature of ſin, or the danger of "walking in the counſel of the ungodly."

II. The deceitful and hardening nature of ſin, which inſenſibly leads from "walking in the counſel of the ungodly," to "ſtanding in the way of ſinners."

III. The finiſhing ſtage of wickedneſs, the moſt criminal and moſt pernicious character, viz, of the *ſcornful*, who are bold enough to treat things ſerious and ſacred with deriſion.

Having done this, I ſhall make ſome application of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

In the firſt place, let us conſider the infectious nature of ſin, or the danger of walking in the counſel of the ungodly. That the ſociety of bad men is highly dangerous to all, but eſpecially to young perſons, is indeed a truth which no ſober man will deny, and which hath been often ſet in the ſtrongeſt light by religious and moral writers: it may therefore ſeem unneceſſary to inſiſt upon it. But, my brethren, I am perſuaded, that it fares often with known and common truths, as with common mercies, they are deſpiſed for their cheapneſs. Though their certainty be readily allowed, their uſe and application is, notwithſtanding, or, perhaps, for that very reaſons, in a great meaſure neglected. How ſeldom is it that men make the diſtinction with care, and act upon it with prudence and reſolution; either in their own conduct, or in the diſpoſal of their children? Bear with me, therefore, while I endeavor to impreſs your minds with a ſenſe of your obligation to depart from the ſociety of evil-doers, and to preſerve, with the utmoſt ſolicitude, all young perſons under your care, from the mortal contagion.

For the importance and neceſſity of this, you have the concurrent teſtimony of wiſe and good men, in every age and nation; experience hath taught it to the moſt barbarous, as well as moſt improved and poliſhed people. There is no nation of which hiſtory hath preſerved us any account, but, in their proverbial ſayings, which are the product of time, we find a warning againſt the infection of corrupt ſociety. What dying parent, in his laſt or parting adieu to his children, ever omitted to caution them againſt the ſociety of bad men? nay, doth not daily experience prove this, beyond diſpute, to every one who hath the leaſt degree either of memory or reflection? Is there among you any perſon, who has arrived at the unhappy diſtinction of being known for a profligate? Whenever this happens, thoſe about him are able to mark the progreſs of his corruption, and can even point out the perſons, or ſocieties, where he was firſt taught the rudiments of vice, and initiated in the principles of licentiouſneſs and riot. I am none of thoſe who either deny or conceal the original, inherent, univerſal corruption of human nature; and yet I ſcruple not to affirm, that example, inſtruction, and aſſiſtance, are neceſſary to our improvement even in vice. Without this, no ſingle perſon is capable of arriving at that degree of depravity which we have ſometimes occaſion to obſerve.

Whoever would examine into the reaſons, and impreſs his mind with a ſenſe of the danger of corrupt ſociety, eſpecially to youth, may juſt reflect upon the following particulars.

1. We are all by nature prone to ſin. It is the growth of the ſoil, as weeds of the curſed ground. If weeds can hardly be reſtrained by the utmoſt diligence and care of the huſbandman, what an enormous product might he expect if he would directly apply himſelf to their encouragement and cultivation? Juſt ſo, if by the utmoſt care and attention, parents can hardly reſtrain the irregularities of their children, and form them to true piety and goodneſs; what wickedneſs may they not arrive at, if they are delivered over to ſchools of profanity, and ſuffered to form their ſentiments and manners, from thoſe who have long

" walked in the ways of their own hearts, and in the sight " of their own eyes," without " fearing God, or regard- " ing man ?"

2. Young persons are ignorant and unsuspicious ; strangers to the world, they are alike ignorant of the characters of men, and the effects of vicious courses. What a prey must such be to the artful and insinuating language of those, who, enslaved by habit, and wearing the chains of vice, find their chief remaining pleasure in seducing others into the same miserable state ? Justly is the great enemy of mankind called the deceiver, because he betrayed our first parents into rebellion by a lie ; and in the same way he and all his servants continue to paint and varnish over sin with false colours, that it may be embraced without reluctance, by those who know not that afterwards " it biteth " like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Need I tell you in what a decent garb sin is often clothed ; and what honorable names it often assumes in the world, to gain the easier admission ? Sensuality and intemperance is social affection, and good fellowship : filthy obscene conversation is but harmless mirth and freedom : anger and resentment are but honor, resolution, and dignity of mind. In short, the whole tenor and strain of fashionable conversation is often little else than a strong illusion put upon the mind, to pervert the dictates of reason, and evade the reproofs of conscience. How dangerous such intercourse to young unwary minds, who are often deeply penetrated with the poison, before they so much as suspect the design of its being administered ? It requires no common degree of fortitude and resolution, as well as no small measure of spiritual wisdom, to resist the importunity of sinners, and unravel the subtilty with which they lie in wait to deceive.

3. Vice is usually baited with pleasure, of which young persons are peculiarly sensible : their affections of every kind are in the most lively and vigorous state. One of the first and most important lessons, which parents and guardians must teach them, is moderation and restraint ; whereas the immediate effect of associating with the profane, is not only to strengthen their passions by indulgence, but to instruct them how to plead in their defence ; and

above all, to inſpire them with an abhorrence of confinement and rule. From theſe unhappy attachments, theſe moſt pernicious friendſhips it is, that inſtruction, however excellent, is unwillingly liſtened to; and the moſt wiſe and gentle government is eſteemed harſh and ſevere. It has been ſometimes obſerved, that perſons ſtrictly and piouſly educated, when they have come into the world, have run headlong into the moſt vicious and abandoned courſe of life. This has been commonly aſcribed to the rigor of their former confinement, and an advice grafted upon it, that parents ſhould be leſs ſevere to their children, leſt they ſhould more than compenſate this early reſtraint, by the liberties which they afterwards aſſume. But though I willingly admit, that every parent ſhould temper his authority with gentleneſs and love; yet I am far from thinking the effect, juſt now mentioned, is aſcribed to its proper cauſe; it is not owing ſo much to the rigor of parental authority, as to young perſons getting into the ſociety of men without principle, and there ſecretly imbibing theſe vicious deſires, which afterwards they rejoice in an opportunity of gratifying to the full. However ſtrict and ſevere any perſon's education may be, if he comes to maturity of age, before he contracts an intimacy with thoſe who juſtify the commiſſion of ſin, conſcience will have acquired ſo great authority, that all ſolicitation to groſs wickedneſs will be received with abhorrence. This opinion is ſupported by a fact, which I imagine I have obſerved, that the children of pious parents, who are betrayed into vicious courſes, are almoſt always ſuch as have been moſt early removed from their immediate inſpection.

4. The danger of corrupt ſociety to young perſons appears, from their being expoſed to ridicule and ſcorn, which is of all other trials hardeſt for them to bear. I ſhall have occaſion, on the third general head, to ſpeak more fully on this ſubject; but in the mean time, it is certain, that a ſenſe of ſhame is ſtrong in young perſons in general, and that ridicule is the uſual weapon by which adepts in vice aſſault the cauſe of truth and piety; by which indeed they commonly endeavor to deſtroy all regard to decency and order. It is lamentable to think how often

persons of excellent capacity and admirable dispositions, have been led astray by the abuse of this most amiable quality, a sense of shame.

From all these considerations, we need not be surprised at the frequent and strong cautions given in the word of God, upon this subject: Prov. xiii. 20. "He that walketh "with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools "shall be destroyed."—Chap. xxviii. 7. "Whoso keep-"eth the law, is a wise son; but he that is a companion "of riotous men, shameth his father." But there is nothing more moving than that earnest and pathetic exhortation; Chap. iv. 14, 15. "Enter not into the path of "the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid "it: pass not by it: turn from it and pass away." The wise man's insisting upon his important counsel, and the reiteration of the expressions, serve to convey in the strongest manner, a sense of the certain ruin of those who neglect to observe it.

II. Let us now proceed to consider the hardening nature of sin, which leads from "walking in the counsel of "the ungodly, to standing in the way of sinners." Upon this, as on the former particular, I may observe, it is a known and beaten subject, on which it is easy to say things strong, but difficult to say any thing new. There are several just remarks upon it, or striking similitudes, which have been handed down from the earliest ages; and were probably the first fruits of human experience. The little that I am at present to repeat or add, shall be divided into two parts: 1. The gradual and insensible progress of sin, which leads the sinner on from one step to another, till he is irrecoverably lost. 2. The strength and power of inveterate habit.

1. The insensible progress of sin. It is wonderful by what artful methods, what plausible pretences, and what slow degrees, sin makes its first approaches. Let some of those persons who are now lost to all sense of duty, or of shame, reflect, if possible, with what horror they would once have thought of the practices, which at present they are not able to forsake. Every sin, how small soever, opens a passage for the admission of multitudes of others;

breaks the reſtraint of conſcience ; habituates and embol-dens the ſinner. The ancients were wont to ſay, That the way of ſin is down-hill : every ſtep a man takes on this declivity, accelerates his motion, ſo that it becomes more and more difficult, and at laſt impoſſible, to ſtop his courſe. This is what the apoſtle Paul had in his view, when he gave this excellent precept to the Chriſtian Hebrews; Heb. iii. 13. " But exhort one another daily, " while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardened " through the deceitfulneſs of ſin." We may ſay of ſin, in general, what Solomon ſays of ſtrife ; " The beginning " of it is like the letting out of water." If you watch againſt the beginning of ſin, you may hope to prevail ; but if you once grant it indulgence, it will eſtabliſh and increaſe its own power. To attempt then to ſtop its pro-greſs, is like endeavoring to gather together a flood of water, after you have, with your own hands, opened the ſluices which have cauſed it to overflow.

2. To the inſenſible progreſs of ſin, add the ſtrength and power of inveterate habit. This is repreſented to us in the ſtrongeſt terms in ſcripture, where the changing of an inveterate habit is compared to a natural impoſſibility : Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the " leopard his ſpots ? then may ye alſo do good, that are " accuſtomed to do evil."

As we may receive many uſeful moral leſſons from the viſible creation and the courſe of nature ; ſo this in par-ticular, of the force of habit, is, if I may ſpeak ſo, written in the moſt legible characters, and repeated in every page of both. A ſtone, which has long continued in one place, makes itſelf a bed, and is with great difficulty removed : a plant or tree that has long been confined to one poſition, or made to grow in a particular ſhape, will ſeldom ever receive any other. This is alſo the caſe with our own bodily frame. Particular poſtures or motions to which we have been early habituated, can ſcarcely be altered by the utmoſt attention, and the ſtrongeſt inclination of the will : the obſtinacy is ſtill greater in all habits where deſire and affection have place. It is eaſy to ſee every day, the vio-lent attachment men have to employments and pleaſures,

however trifling in themselves, to which they have been long accustomed. But it is greatest of all in sinful habits, because in them the force of custom is added to the original strength of natural corruption.

Both the above particulars may be illustrated, by observing, how much habit and example together operate to the improvement and perfection of guilt, in large and populous cities. There we may often find so astonishing a degree of wickedness of every sort, as it is mortifying to think that human nature should be capable of: there we may find persons who will perpetrate calmly and sedately, what would surprize a less knowing sinner so much as to hear of. And what pity is it, that there should be found some, who, during their occasional residence in places of great resort, lay down their innocence, instead of their rusticity? and bring home no other accomplishment but an insolence and boldness of countenance in the commission of sin? That instructed in the principles, as well as habituated to the practice of impiety, they are not content with doing evil, but discover an incredible industry and assiduity in deceiving and seducing others? And shall I not add, what pity is it, that some, instead of improving and adorning their minds by application to study, or storing them with useful knowledge, do more than lose their time, by drinking in the poison of infidel writings? Instead of fitting themselves to discharge the duties of public or private life, with propriety and dignity, they only acquire the unhappy talent of setting their minds at ease in the commission of sin, and make large additions to their own natural depravity of heart.

III. Let us consider the finishing stage of wickedness, the most criminal and the most pernicious character, viz. that of the scornful, who are bold enough to treat things serious and sacred, with derision.

This part of the subject, my brethren, merits your particular attention, and naturally divides itself into these two branches: First, The sin and danger of it to the persons who are guilty of it. Secondly, The unhappy influence it hath in polluting others.

1. The ſin and danger of it to the guilty perſons. Whoever will conſider the ſtate of mind from which ſuch deriſion muſt flow, will immediately perceive that it implies the higheſt degree of profaneneſs and impiety. It is ſuch an audacious attack upon the majeſty of the living God, as muſt ſtrike every thinking perſon with aſtoniſhment and horror. One of the firſt principles of all religion is reverence for the Deity, and for every thing that hath a viſible relation to him. This we find written upon the conſcience, in general, even of the moſt blinded heathens. The common and trivial uſe of the name of God is prohibited under the ſevereſt ſanctions in the oracles of truth. We find alſo ſome inſtances there, of mere irreverence being puniſhed in a very terrible manner. The angelic hoſts, though perfectly pure and holy, are yet repreſented as deeply penetrated with a ſenſe of the extreme diſproportion between uncreated excellence, and created weakneſs, and filled with the higheſt veneration of him who only is HOLY: Iſaiah vi. 1, 2, 3. "In the year that "king Uzziah died, I ſaw alſo the Lord ſitting upon a "throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. "Above it ſtood the ſeraphims: each one had ſix wings, "with twain he covered his face, and with twain he co-"vered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one "cried unto another, and ſaid, Holy, holy, holy, is the "Lord of hoſts, the whole earth is full of his glory." It may ſeem unneceſſary or improper to add, and yet it gives me pleaſure that I can do it with truth, the ſame thing has evidently diſtinguiſhed ſome of the beſt and greateſt men on earth. We are well informed, that ſome of the greateſt inquirers into nature, as they grew in years, and increaſed in the knowledge of the works of God, did alſo viſibly grow in an awe and reverence of their almighty Maker. Of one in particular, it is ſaid, that he never mentioned the name of God without a ſenſible pauſe in his diſcourſe. After this, what can we think of any poor creature, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils, being guilty of contempt and ſcorn of the name, attributes, works or worſhip of God!

There is a remarkable difference between sins of this kind and many other sins which are, notwithstanding, very heinous and aggravated in the sight of God. Into many other sins of a very gross nature, a man may be hurried by the violence of passion, or betrayed by the suddenness of temptation; but, if I mistake not, scorn of things sacred must always be a deliberate crime: the sin cannot be committed without a good deal of composure and presence of mind: reason is not over-borne, as in other cases, by appetite; but reason itself (if the perverted gift of God in such persons may be called so) is principal in the guilt. A scorner is never tempted, properly speaking, but by these acts and exercises of religion, which should excite the veneration of all, and do excite the veneration of many, not excepting some of the most profligate.

Contempt of things sacred is an entire victory over conscience. In many cases men sin with some reluctance: it is not so much their choice, as they are over-borne by the strength of corruption, and vitiate the peace of their minds, to gratify the demands of lust: hence remorse often succeeds the indulgence; and though real reformation does not take place, yet it lays the sinner under frequent and considerable restraints. But in treating things sacred with scorn, the mind is wholly at ease; and finds its pleasure in the very impiety itself. The truth is, so entire is the victory over conscience, that nothing but settled atheism and infidelity can be guilty of it, according to that just expression of the psalmist, Psalm x. 13. "Wherefore doth "the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, "thou wilt not require it."

It is also an entire victory over shame: this is commonly the last restraint that sinners overthrow. Many are confined and kept in awe by the fear of man, long after they have cast off the fear of God. From the shamefulness of sin, religion preserves some degree of credit, even where a great plurality is in the opposite interest. For this reason the prophet Jeremiah mentions it as a great aggravation of the sins of his countrymen, that they were lost to all sense of shame: Jer. vi. 15. "Were they

" aſhamed when they had committed abomination? nay, " they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh; " therefore they ſhall fall among them that fall: at the " time that I viſit them, they ſhall be caſt down, ſaith the " Lord." But is it not evident, that ſcorners are deſtitute of ſhame? They have, indeed, not only extinguiſhed it in themſelves, but the manifeſt deſign of their converſation is to deſtroy it in the minds of others.

I need add nothing further to ſhew the guilt and danger of perſons of this character, but putting you in mind of the rank which it holds in ſeveral catalogues of crying ſins in the holy ſcriptures, and the awful judgments of God which are denounced againſt it. The prophet Ezekiel, in enumerating the ſins of Jeruſalem, among many enormities, hath this; Ezek. xxii. 8. " Thou haſt deſpi- " ſed mine holy things, and profaned my Sabbaths." And the prophet Iſaiah, Iſa. xxviii. 14, 21, 22. " Now, " therefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye ſcornful men " that rule this people which is in Jeruſalem.—For the " Lord ſhall riſe up as in mount Perazim, he ſhall be " wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his " work, his ſtrange work; and bring to paſs his act, his " ſtrange act. Now, therefore, be not mockers, leſt your " bands be made ſtrong: for, I have heard from the Lord " God of hoſts, a conſumption even determined upon the " whole earth." See alſo the ſtate of things in Jeruſalem, immediately before the Babyloniſh captivity: 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. " But they mocked the meſſengers of God, " and deſpiſed his words, and miſuſed his prophets, un- " til the wrath of the Lord aroſe againſt his people, till " there was no remedy."

2. How unhappy is the influence of this character upon others! As it is highly criminal, it is pernicious in the ſame proportion. Conſidered only as an example, it muſt have dangerous effects: many ſins ſhun the light; and are, by thoſe that commit them, concealed with the utmoſt care. When that is the caſe, whatever they may be to the guilty perſon, they are far from being ſo dangerous to the public, as thoſe crimes that are not only often viſible, but done on purpoſe to be ſeen. Now ſcoffers at

things sacred must always be an example, as the crime cannot be committed alone; and, indeed, they often aspire at a kind of character for despising religion, and would be greatly mortified, were their accomplishments of this kind hidden from the world.

Neither is it merely a common example: scoffers are not only barely sinners; they are advocates for sin: it is their constant study to break the restraints of conscience, and weaken every moral obligation in others, as well as in themselves. This too they endeavor to effect in the most agreeable manner: contempt of religion makes a part of their social mirth; and these two things are soon looked upon by the unwary youth as so inseparable, that the one is quite tasteless and insipid, unless it is seasoned by the other.

It deserves particular consideration on this subject, that scoffing at things sacred is apt to give natural modesty, and the sense of shame in young persons, a wrong and contrary turn. Modesty is the strongest natural fence to virtue. We find notwithstanding, very frequently, that persons of great natural modesty have not courage sufficient to profess or practise what conscience dictates to be their duty. How unhappy is it when so excellent a preservative from vice is thus quite perverted, and has an opposite effect! All history is full of the powerful effects of a sense of shame, both in doing good and evil. It breaks the strongest of all natural attachments: it is not to be overcome by the severest laws, though fortified with the most terrible sanctions. Now, as it needs no proof, that scoffing at sacred things tends to pervert the sense of shame, it must have the greatest and most immediate effect in bringing on a general dissolution of manners.

The malignant influence of profane scorn is not confined to young persons, there being very few of any character who are not hurt by it in a most sensible manner. Would you be convinced of this? How rarely do we find any possessed of a determined courage and resolution in opposing fashionable crimes! How unwilling are the best to suffer shame for adhering to their duty! What a variety

of efforts will be made to escape it! Contempt is disagreeable at any rate; and it is intolerable to pride, some remains of which, capable of being irritated, are to be found in the very best men on earth. For this reason, the most established Christians do carefully shun all unnecessary society with wicked men, knowing how difficult it is to avoid sin in one shape or other. If such is the case with the best, how dangerous must the society of scorners be to all who are able to bear them; but especially to those who "have pleasure in them!"

It will not be improper here to observe, that one great reason why scorn aud ridicule is so hurtful to religion, is, that it attacks things sacred through the medium of human weakness. True piety and virtue is in itself so venerable an object, that it is not possible to render it ridiculous, but by misrepresentation: however, as it is always, in this world, attended with human infirmity, this affords a handle to profane persons to load it with reproach. Their success in this unhappy design, is no greater than may naturally be expected; few are able to distinguish between a person and his cause, nor indeed, is it possible to attack the one without wounding the other. It evidently appears, that it is impossible to treat religious persons in general, or the expressions, forms and rites, commonly appropriated to religious worship, with scorn; and not, at the same time, bring religion itself into contempt.

I do not mean by this to plead for approbation, or even indulgence, to any indecency, by which folly or vanity may abuse or disgrace the worship of God: far from it. I think every thing of that kind ought to be reproved with severity, and opposed with resolution: but I contend, that it is infinitely more proper to treat it with abhorrence and detestation, than with scorn. Whoever will give himself this liberty, may easily find an opportunity, from the weakness inseparable from humanity, to throw off that reverence for God and his service, which it ought to be his chief solicitude to preserve and improve. There are many whose visible weakness is to be lamented; and, perhaps, there is no human character at all so perfectly decent

in every reſpect, but, by imitation and a little aggravation, it may be rendered ridiculous.

Let it alſo be conſidered, that it requires far leſs comprehenſion of mind to expoſe the folly and weakneſs of others, or even to invent plauſible falſehoods, and miſrepreſent them, than to reaſon with juſtneſs and propriety on the moſt common ſubjects: A very ſmall degree of ability is ſufficient to accompliſh a ſcoffer, who is not reſtrained by any ſenſe of duty. Nor is this to be wondered at; for there is always a ſufficient number to whoſe underſtandings the moſt vile and miſerable performance is perfectly adapted.

In ſupport of all this, I could adduce many examples, abundantly known and familiar: but, for certain reaſons, I ſhall only mention a very celebrated inſtance from antiquity. Socrates was certainly the wiſeſt and the beſt man of all the heathens, whoſe characters have been tranſmitted to us. His behavior was ſuch, as not only deſerved, but ſeemed fit to command the eſteem and veneration of all who knew him: yet was this worthy man ſucceſsfully turned into ridicule, by a perſon, whoſe writings, which have come down to us, are to the laſt degree mean and contemptible. Nor was the effect merely tranſient; for in the opinion of many, this contempt paved the way for the hatred which his enemies ſoon raiſed againſt him, and which brought him to his death.

I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome improvement of what has been ſaid: and I think I can diſcover in the aſpect of the audience, that you already ſuppoſe I have been led to the choice of this ſubject, by the late atrocious and flagrant offence, committed in the near neighborhood of where I now ſtand; and which hath affected every thinking and well-diſpoſed perſon in the place, with a mixture of indignation and concern. That this is indeed the caſe, I have no intention either to deny or conceal. Many, I know, are of opinion, that fidelity to my charge calls for ſomething of this nature on the preſent occaſion; if to others the particular diſcuſſion and application of this ſubject ſhould need any apology, there

are two things, for which I hope to have the teſtimony of all my ordinary hearers. 1. That I have never omitted to mention with all freedom and plainneſs, the ſins and duties of every rank and claſs of men, as the ſubject led to it, or the occaſion ſeemed to require it. 2. That in doing this, I have generally avoided bringing in particular accidents that have fallen out in the place; being much of opinion, that the leſs perſonal any thing of that nature is, it is the more likely to be uſeful. But though I continue in the ſame opinion in general, there are ſome things ſo flagrant and atrocious in their nature, ſo dangerous and hurtful in their effects, that bare ſilence concerning them would carry in it an imputation of unfaithfulneſs or partiality in a miniſter of Chriſt. And as in the preſent caſe, the ſcandal ſeems loudly to call for ſome public notice of it, ſo it is impoſſible to make the perſons more known than they are already by their own folly. If it could make them any more aſhamed, it would be an unſpeakable benefit both to the public and themſelves.

With a view therefore to the ſcandal juſt now hinted at, ſuffer me to apply the truths above illuſtrated, by giving you ſome advice and direction, under the three following characters, one or more of which will include every perſon who now hears me.

1. To thoſe who are young: in that lovely, precious, dangerous ſeaſon of life; of all others the fitteſt for learning what is good, and unhappily prone to learn or imitate what is evil. My dear children, this is not the firſt of many times I have addreſſed inſtruction particularly to you, and I pray that God may open your hearts to receive it. Let me beſeech you, firſt of all, to learn this important leſſon, to diſtruſt yourſelves: be ſenſible of your inexperience, and be perſuaded of your danger from the admonitions of others. The greateſt evidence you can give of real knowledge, is to be ſenſible of your ignorance; and of true wiſdom, to be willing to learn: the ſolicitude and concern of your parents or other relations, to preſerve you from the deſtructive paths of vice, is from their certain knowledge of what you are now unwilling to believe. Above all things, ſhun, as the peſtilence, the ſociety of

profane ſcorners. Loſt to all ſenſe of piety, ſeared in their conſciences, and enſlaved to their luſts, they will do all in their power to deſtroy a riſing ſenſe of religion in your minds: "While they promiſe you liberty, they themſelves are the ſervants of corruption." Think upon eternity approaching: no man can foreſee or foretell to you now, whether your time on earth ſhall be long or ſhort; whether you ſhall have much proſperity, or many trials in the preſent world; but as the bleſſing of God is the beſt ingredient in all temporal mercies, ſo being at peace with him is the beſt ſupport under ſuffering, and the only preparation for death.

But as all the deluſive arguments in favor of ſin are drawn from this preſent life, ſuffer me to plead the cauſe of piety and truth in this reſpect. Be aſſured that true religion is the way to health, peace, opulence and public eſteem. Hear the wiſeſt of mere men: Prov. iii. 16, 17. "Length of days is in Wiſdom's right hand, and in her "left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of plea- "ſantneſs, and all her paths are peace." Do not look only on thoſe libertines who are in the beginning or middle of their courſe, whoſe ſpirits are lively, and their vigor yet unimpaired: look on the few older practitioners. Theſe were the good fellows and ſocial ſpirits of a former period: their companions were cut off in the middle of their days, and they remain as beacons for your inſtruction and warning. Do you ſee them ſullen in their deportment, mean in their attire, and deſpiſed by the world itſelf; their faces bloated with intemperance, and their miſerable offſpring pale with hunger, or crippled by neglect? theſe are the terrible fruits of midnight rioting. They were once as merry in their cups, as ready with their jeſts, and as great deſpiſers of Sabbaths, and ſermons, of whining and praying, as any of their more ſprightly ſucceſſors, who are in the high road to the ſame deſpicable end.

My dear friends, when you perceive any one ſtirring up your averſion to parental authority, and teaching you to deſpiſe the troubleſome admonitions of miniſters and mothers, know that he is enticing you to the ruin of ſoul, body and eſtate. Hear again the wiſe man, or rather the

Spirit of God ſpeaking by him: Prov. xxiii. 19, &c. "Hear then, my ſon, and be wiſe, and guide thine heart in "the way: be not amongſt wine bibbers, amongſt riot- "ous eaters of fleſh; for the drunkard and the glutton "ſhall come to poverty, and drowſineſs ſhall clothe a man "with rags. Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and "deſpiſe not thy mother when ſhe is old." Prov. xxx. 17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and deſpiſeth "to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley ſhall pick it "out, and the young eagles ſhall eat it."

Do you indeed think, that any of your looſe companions, with all their profeſſions of friendſhip and attachment, have the ſame concern for your true intereſt that a parent has; or the ſame judgment to diſcern it? You may eſteem it as a favor when you are aſſiſted in the indulgence of your pleaſures, and your irregular courſes are concealed from the knowledge of your relations; but it is in truth the greateſt injury that can poſſibly be done you: it is often diſtreſſing to thoſe of riper years and more experience, to obſerve how difficult it is to perſuade young perſons of eaſy tempers and warm affections, of the danger of aſſociating with profligates. We reckon it hard that you will not believe that they are worthleſs, upon our teſtimony; but muſt learn it from your own fatal experience. Believe it, there is no true friendſhip but what is founded on the principles of piety and virtue: and if you confide in thoſe of a different character, you will ſooner or later be rewarded with treachery and falſehood: and indeed, the ſooner the better; for their friendſhip is infinitely more hurtful than any effects of their diſpleaſure. Again therefore, let me beſeech the younger part of my audience, who have not yet themſelves thrown off all regard to decency, to give up all friendſhip with, and avoid the ſociety, of thoſe who have. It is uſually a hard ſacrifice, I confeſs; but neceſſary to your preſervation from the moſt deſtructive courſes. What ſignifies the ſcorn or reſentment of a few hardened wretches, compared to the peace of your own minds, the heart-felt pleaſure you will give to every real friend, your comfort and happineſs in this life, and the well grounded hope of a bleſſed immortality?

2. Let me shortly address myself to parents, or others who are intrusted with the education of youth. And, oh that I could make you sensible of the importance and difficulty of your charge! There are many directions, which might be given you with respect to education in general; but I choose to confine my thoughts at present to what is suggested by the occasion and subject of this discourse. Let it therefore be your care, to preserve your children, as much as possible, from the company and conversation of profane persons, especially those who are tainted with infidelity: and who, as its natural consequence, treat the exercises of piety with contempt and scorn. To suffer this, when you can hinder it, is treating their souls in the same manner, as you would do their bodies, if you placed doses of sweetened poison in every corner of the house. You will daily perceive how children are formed by imitation, in their temper and manners: they must bear a resemblance to those from whom they receive their first impressions: but if this is the case in general, how much more must they embrace the principles, and imitate the practice of their companions in pleasure?

This caution is so necessary, that where counsel and intreaty are not sufficient to procure compliance, authority ought to be interposed. Mere authority indeed will be very ineffectual; and therefore, I must particularly recommend to you an early attention to your children's opinion and judgment: they soon form a judgment, and will give early marks of approbation and aversion of persons and characters. Do your utmost to make them esteem religion, as the greatest happiness to every person, and the most amiable part of every character. Make them sensible, from your conduct, that it is not only your sincere choice, but greatest delight. It is very fatal to them, when they are led to look upon it as a burden and constraint. Habituate them early to consider all other qualities as good for nothing, when piety is wanting; and a person of a truly Christian conversation as worthy of the highest esteem, whatever be his station or circumstances in other respects. Remember it makes a part of the character of a good man, as drawn by the Psalmist David; Psa. xv. 4. "In whose

" eyes a vile perſon is deſpiſed, but he honoreth them that " fear the Lord." I am perſuaded, that many, who truly fear God themſelves, are inadvertently guilty of a great miſtake in this particular: they diſcover unhappily too much of their admiration or envy of the natural advantages of others, independent of their moral character. Dreſs, furniture and wealth, are looked upon as diſtinguiſhing advantages; and children are often ſuffered to indulge themſelves in mockery and deriſion; even where deformity, poverty, aukwardneſs, and things perfectly innocent in themſelves, are the only objects of their ſcorn. Intellectual abilities alſo, comprehenſion of mind, and ſprightlineſs of fancy, are commonly much the objects of eſteem; and young perſons are inſenſibly led to admire theſe natural qualities, without at all conſidering to what purpoſes they are applied. This muſt neceſſarily have a fatal effect; and therefore parents ſhould endeavor, as much as poſſible, to preſerve upon their own minds, and inſpire their children with an eſteem of true piety, and a horror and averſion at a vicious character, whatever advantage may happen to accompany it.

If due care is taken betimes in this reſpect, I am perſuaded it will, in a great meaſure, prevent the danger ariſing from the example or ſolicitation of the patrons of impiety. Their chief ſucceſs depends on their real character's lying concealed, till it is ſafe and proper to avow it. They inſtill the principles of irreligion, as a wiſe man would do the moſt ſacred truths, by little and little, as their diſciples are able to bear them, and always do it under the diſguiſe of pleaſure. There is nothing more different than the converſation and carriage of a libertine, in the preſence of thoſe of whom he ſtands in awe, and among his ſelect companions; and even theſe laſt are but gradually initiated into the concluding and horrid myſteries of profanity and blaſphemy. Young minds therefore ſhould be early formed to ſuch a taſte, as to look for piety and virtue, before they will give their approbation or affection to any human accompliſhments. Were this the caſe, they would not be ſo often betrayed by ſpecious appearances, and drawn in, by degrees, firſt, to ſuffer; then,

to imitate; and, at last, to delight in the most vicious practices.

While I am giving you these directions, I cannot help observing, that you may see the great necessity of wisdom and prudence in the religious education of children. Apply yourselves to it with diligence. It is an extensive and difficult, but, at the same time, a noble, useful, delightful study. "And if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of "God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth "not."

I shall now close this discourse with a few words to professing Christians in general.

My brethren, when vice rears up its head, and appears with insolence and boldness, as it will certainly affect every good man with concern, so it is of great importance what treatment it meets with from the public. If it passes without notice, we may conclude, that corruption hath deeply infected the whole mass. If men are afraid or ashamed to express their indignation at it, we may conclude the conspiracy is formidable; and that the interest of truth and piety is greatly on the decline. There are many, who in cases of gross scandal, rather choose to keep themselves at ease, by forbearance and indulgence to the guilty, than run the hazard of provoking their resentment by an honest declaration of their real sentiments. Nor is it seldom to be observed, that the very persons who do least in their own sphere, for stemming the tide of profanity, are the first and loudest in complaining of the negligence of magistrates or pastors, in inflicting public punishments or censures.

Whilst, therefore, I am endeavoring, in some measure, to discharge my own duty, I must also put you in mind of yours. It is evidently the duty of all who profess to fear God, to abstain from the society of those who are grossly profane, without discovering any sense of penitence or sorrow. The truth is, I ought rather to make this a mark of true religion, and affirm, that all good men will do so; than inform them that they should. There must be a likeness of disposition among familiar friends. Had you that abhorrence of impiety that you ought to have, you would

count the ſociety of impious perſons a ſtain and reproach to your own characters. Of this I am able to give a very ſtrong, and, at the ſame time, a plain and familiar proof. Were any perſon known to be guilty of theft and diſhoneſty, or any fault that is odious and diſgraceful in the world, every one would reckon his intimate companions almoſt, if not to the ſame degree, abandoned as himſelf. The ſame thing will certainly hold as to profanity or licentiouſneſs; though indeed it carries in it a melancholy proof, that ſins againſt piety or purity are far from being held in the ſame abhorrence, as what endangers our ſubſtance or temporal intereſt. I muſt however, here beg of you, to attend to a ſingular and very ſtrong paſſage of the epiſtle to the Romans. The apoſtle Paul cloſes his deſcription of the profane world in the following terms: Rom. ii. 32. "Who knowing the judgment of God, "(that they which commit ſuch things are worthy of "death) not only do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them "that do them." I have looked into the original, and find the words juſtly tranſlated; and you ſee, from the conſtruction of the ſentence, the apoſtle repreſents having pleaſure in ſenſual and wicked men, as implying a depravity of character ſuperior even to that of ſenſuality itſelf.

But as aſſociating with the profane is a mark of profanity, ſo every degree of countenance given to them, by perſons of entire character, is a ſenſible injury to the public. It ſerves to put honor upon vice, and in part to deliver it from that juſt reproach which ought to be the puniſhment of the guilty, and a warning to others not to tread in their ſteps. I have, on ſeveral occaſions, obſerved that the preſent period or ſtate of things, in this place and congregation, demands the greateſt concern for the public intereſt of religion. Growing in numbers, and growing, I hope, in wealth, as the effect of your own and your fathers induſtry, you are in danger of the introduction of a worldly ſpirit by the riſing generation. This every good man ought, with the utmoſt prudence and reſolution, to oppoſe; particularly by doing all in his power to preſerve the honor and reſpect due to true religion, and treating with contempt every open enemy to that important intereſt.

I sincerely wish you improved, and possessed of every accomplishment that is truly valuable; but beware of that false politeness, which consists in little else than an opposition to religion and sobriety. And, indeed I am afraid we shall not soon attain to any other; at least, not by the help of those, who as they set religion at defiance, so are equally strangers to that elegance, and sense of decency which distinguishes persons of higher rank.

The late riotous meeting was without doubt the most audacious thing of the kind that ever was attempted in this place; and therefore calls for an open and vigorous testimony against it, by every person in his sphere. Regard for the glory of God, love to the souls of men, and solicitude for the rising generation, conspire in requiring you to exert yourselves in such a cause: and shall I not add, compassion to the persons themselves? Their worst enemies are those who treat them with indulgence, so long as they continue to justify or to palliate their offence. Nothing serves to harden sinners more, than when no notice is taken of their crimes; and they find themselves just as generally, and as well received, as if they had done no evil. On the other hand, when they perceive the deep concern of others on their account, it is an excellent mean of bringing them to serious reflection, and inducing them to tremble at themselves. Wherefore, my beloved hearers, let me beseech you to preserve your horror of sin, notwithstanding the boldness of sinners. Do every thing in your power to reclaim the offenders. Be earnest in your supplications to almighty God, that he would snatch them as brands from the burning, and raise them up as trophies of his victorious grace. But while they continue in their enmity to God, forget not, on your own account, the apostolic counsel; "have no fellowship with the unfruitful "works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

MINISTERIAL FIDELITY IN DECLARING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

SERMON 42.

A Farewell Diſcourſe delivered at Paiſley, May, 1768.

ACTS xx. 26, 27.

Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not ſhunned to declare unto you all the counſel of God.

My Brethren,

THESE words are a part of the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to the elders of Epheſus, when taking leave of them, under a firm perſuaſion, or rather a certain knowledge, that he would never again ſee them in the body. My preſent ſituation, of which none of you is ignorant, has determined me to the choice of this paſſage, as a very proper ſubject, from which I may conclude the exerciſe of my miniſtry among you. I had once occaſion, on leaving another charge, to have taken a formal farewell of a very affectionate people, but had not courage to attempt it. The circumſtances attending the removal, which, if Providence prevent not, ſeems now to be at hand, are ſuch as do not leſſen, but greatly increaſe the difficulty of ſpeaking from ſuch a ſubject. And yet, in another view, they

seemed to urge it so strongly, and to present such an opportunity of being useful, as I durst not wholly decline. Every Christian ought to be an observer of providence. Nothing will more effectually promote his holiness and comfort. And both a minister and his people ought to improve the aspect of providence, when it hath any thing peculiar in it, to their mutual benefit.

Let me therefore, intreat you to attend to the following discourse, with patience and composure. This request I the rather hope you will comply with, as there is nothing intended that is personal, further than must necessarily arise from the subject itself, or be unavoidably suggested by your own thoughts. I bless God that I have no complaint to make of want of duty, or affection upon your vde; neither is it any part of my purpose to justify my own conduct, during the time that I have had the honor and happiness of being intrusted with the ministry of the gospel in this place. I shall therefore only say, that whether I have been able to deliver my own soul, by fidelity in duty, and by purity of principle, I am certain, that siery much has been laid to the charge of many of yours. Least of all do I intend to endeavor to satisfy you of the motives which have induced me to accept of a call to a distant part of the world, and, in some degree, a different employment in the church of Christ. For this, I know that an account must be given, in due time, to a much greater Judge, with whose approbation either the applause or censure of men are not worthy to be laid in the balance. The single purpose, therefore, of the following discourse, shall be to give you such a comprehensive view of the truths of the everlasting gospel,—of the importance and difficulty of a minister's work; as may direct you in the choice of another pastor,—increase your esteem of such as are faithful,—and excite you to guard against every thing that may either discourage them in their work, or prevent their success.

The apostle Paul had planted the church of Ephesus, and he had spent a part of his time there, very considerable, if we consider the extent of his commission, and his many apostolic journies to different parts of the world. In the

whole of his discourse, to the elders of that church, whom he had sent for in his passage to *Jerusalem*, we see the greatest tenderness and affection, and an earnest concern, to engrave upon their hearts the truths which he had taught them while residing there. And, in the words of the text, you see the foundation on which he takes them to record, that he was *free from the blood of all men; for*, says he, *I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* I omit every thing that might be occasionally introduced from the text, or context, such as ministers being chargeable with the blood of those who perish by their neglect, and the doctrine of the gospel being the counsel of God, that I may fix your attention, where certainly the emphasis of this declaration lies, viz. That he had declared to them *all the counsel of God*, and that he had not *shunned* to do so, or that he had not been deterred, by any difficulties, from the faithful discharge of his trust. Therefore, in discoursing further, on this subject, I will endeavor, through divine assistance,

I. To consider the fidelity of a minister, as consisting in *a full and complete* declaration of the counsel of God.

II. To consider the difficulties which may lie in his way, or tempt him to *shun* any part of his work.

III. To make a particular improvement of the subject, by giving you my parting advices, in the spirit of this passage, and in a way, to the best of my judgment, suited to your situation.

First then, Let us consider the fidelity of a minister, as consisting in *a full and complete* declaration of the counsel of God. This is a circumstance which the apostle seems to have laid particular stress upon, in his discourse to the elders of Ephesus, as he not only rests his solemn appeal to themselves, in this passage, upon it, but had mentioned it before, verses, 20, 21. "And how I have kept "back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have "shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from "house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to

" the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward " our Lord Jesus Christ." It is, indeed, a circumstance of the utmost moment, as ministers may be supposed much more ready to fall short in this respect than in any other. It is probable that many more are chargeable with concealing truth, than affirming falsehood; with neglecting duty, than committing crimes; with not building the house, than wilfully pulling it down. Agreeably to this, we find the charge of the prophet, against unfaithful shepherds, is chiefly or only for neglect of duty, Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3, 4. " Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of " Israel, prophesy and say unto them, thus saith the Lord " God unto the shepherds, wo be to the shepherds of Israel, " that do feed themselves: should not the shepherds feed " the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye cloth you with the " wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the " flock: the diseased have ye not strengthened, neither " have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye " bound up that which was broken, neither have ye " brought again that which was driven away, neither have " ye sought that which was lost, but with force and with " cruelty have ye ruled them." But that you may have as comprehensive a view as possible, of the character of a faithful minister, given in the text, observe, that integrity in declaring all the counsel of God, implies the following particulars.

1. Declaring all the truths of God, without any exceptions. The revealed will of God is of great extent and compass. It takes in all that we are to believe concerning God, and all the duty which God requires of man. It gives us an account of the original, and of the fallen state of man; of the early purpose of divine mercy, and the steps that were taken, from age to age, in carrying it into execution; of the person, undertaking, and sufferings of the Saviour; of his laws as a teacher, and his dominion as a king. Together with all this, we have a history of Providence, and many special examples, instructions, and warnings of the most particular kind. Now, my brethren, he who would declare *all the counsel of God*, must pay a due regard to every part, and, as far as time and health

is given him, endeavor to make his people acquainted with the whole. This, to be sure, cannot be done all at once, and at the same time. Doubtless there are some truths of more importance than others. As the foundation must be laid before the structure can be raised, and the foundation and the corner stones are of more moment than the finishings of the surface: yet there is a mutual subserviency of every one in its place to another, and not the least can be wholly omitted without a real injury to those that are retained.

There is a preciousness in every truth that hath the stamp of divine authority upon it; and, therefore, to neglect any of them, and count them trifling, or of little moment, argues a want of reverence for the word of God. The holy scriptures, as they are full and complete, containing every thing that is necessary; so they are perfect and faultless, containing nothing that is unnecessary. Serious persons have often borne testimony to the great utility of such parts of the sacred oracles, as are commonly treated with most indifference. Nay, I cannot help thinking, that the veneration due to God, who doth nothing in vain, obliges us to believe the utility even of those passages whose purpose we ourselves may not as yet have clearly perceived.

They are therefore greatly to be blamed who are at no pains to make known the counsel of God, in its full extent; but how much more those who satisfy themselves with insisting upon some things, which may be most agreeable to their own taste and disposition, to the entire neglect of others that are perhaps of equal or of greater moment? We see this happen too frequently, that things which fill almost every page in the holy scriptures can scarce obtain a place in many sermons. We see some industriously avoid the truths of the everlasting gospel, and others the duties of the moral law. The evil of this is the greater, that there is such a relation between the several parts of God's revealed will, that if any one is left out, every view given of the rest must be not only partial but unjust. He who truly understands the scriptures, will soon perceive, that there is such an inseparable connexion

between one truth and another, that you can hardly admit one without admitting or rejecting the whole; and that none of them can be withdrawn, or concealed, without a manifeſt injury to the beauty and fulneſs of the general ſyſtem.

But, of all others, the moſt wonderful ſet of men are thoſe, who are for concealing ſome of the truths of God, leſt they ſhould be abuſed. The ſovereignty of God, his eternal purpoſe and the freeneſs of his grace, are often paſſed by, under this ridiculous pretence. I would deſpiſe the wiſdom of ſuch perſons; it is arrogance; it is impiety. I do not know any truth that cannot be abuſed by perverſe and corrupt minds, or that has not, in many inſtances, been abuſed. But is this a reaſon for concealing them? No. I would preach them openly; I would preach them fully; I would endeavor to guard them againſt the abuſe; and let ſinners know, that, if they wreſt the good word of God, they do it to their own deſtruction. Oh! that there were more ſubjection of mind to the wiſdom of God: more of a deep and inward conviction, that whatever he hath appointed, is, for that very reaſon, wiſeſt and beſt. There would not then be ſo many attempts to explain away what is clearly contained in the New Teſtament; but we ſhould join, from the heart, with the apoſtle Paul in ſaying, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth "of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! "how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt "finding out?"

2. Integrity of declaring *all the counsel of God*, implies preaching the truths of the goſpel in their full and juſt proportion. Under the former particular, I have ſhewn the neceſſity of doing juſtice to every truth; let us now add the duty of giving their full room and place to important and fundamental truths. In order to make a juſt portrait of a human body, it is neceſſary, not only to have all the parts, but to have every one in the true proportion it bears to another. If one member is ſwelled to an unnatural or monſtrous bulk, and others are ſhrunk or ſhrivelled away almoſt to nothing, it will make the moſt unſeemly figure. Agreeably to this, he, who would faithfully

declare the counsel of God, must have a particular eye to the great and leading truths of the gospel, on which the rest depend, and from which they derive their force and meaning.

If we look into the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, we shall find certain leading truths, which are of so great moment, that they ought hardly ever to be out of view; such as the lost state of man by nature; the absolute necessity of salvation through Christ; the suffering of the Saviour in the sinner's room; and free forgiveness through the blood of the atonement; the necessity of regeneration; and the gift of the Holy Ghost, to enlighten, sanctify and comfort his people. These truths are of such unspeakable moment, in divine revelation, that they ought to be clearly explained, strongly inculcated, and frequently repeated; they are the doctrines of the reformation; they make the substance of all the Protestant confessions; they are the glory of the Protestant churches; and have been sealed by the blood of thousands of suffering martyrs. And, indeed, it comforts me, under the neglect with which they are treated, at present, by many worldly persons in a state of outward ease and security to the church, that, if ever it please God, for our sins, to throw us into the furnace, they will then discover their honor, they will recover their lustre, because they will certainly manifest their influence.

How shall I make you more sensible, what it is to give their full room to these important truths, than by putting you in mind of the regard that was paid to them by the apostles of our Lord, who received their commission immediately from himself, and were not only the first, but the best and most successful ministers that ever were employed in the church of Christ? What a multitude of passages might I cite to this purpose? Acts iv. 12. "Neither "is there salvation in any other; for there is none other "name under heaven given among men, whereby we "must be saved." 1 Cor. iii. 11. "For other foundation "can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. "But what things were gain to me, "those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I

" count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the know-
" ledge of Chriſt Jeſus, my Lord, for whom I have ſuffer-
" ed the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung,
" that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not ha-
" ving mine own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but
" that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſ-
" neſs which is of God by faith?" Without citing any more paſſages, I ſhall only obſerve, that though the apoſtles introduced a great variety of truths in their writings occaſionally, ſuch was, in their opinion, the importance of the doctrine of ſalvation by the croſs of Chriſt, that they denominated the goſpel by it. Preaching Chriſt, and preaching the croſs of Chriſt, was, with them, the ſame thing as preaching the whole. I do not think the apoſtle Paul was defective, in giving particular inſtructions, upon every ſubject, to thoſe churches which he either planted or watered; yet he ſays to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. ii. 2. " For I determined not to know any thing
" among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified;" intimating that ſuch was his attachment to that great truth, that it would occupy, in a manner, the whole of his time and labor; or rather, that it had ſuch an intimate connexion with every other part of the will of God, that, be the ſubject what it would, this could hardly be entirely out of view.

He, who would declare the whole *counsel of God*, muſt ſtill place theſe great and operative doctrines in a conſpicuous point of view; he muſt not paſs them over ſlightly; he muſt not even ſpeak of them coldly, but in ſuch a manner, as to ſhow, that he knows their truth, and feels their moment. What an inconſiſtency for a Chriſtian miniſter, to ſpeak of the Lord Redeemer in ſuch a ſtyle, as naturally leads the hearers to put him upon a level with Socrates or Plato, or other uninſpired teachers, who never pretended to be ſaviours? What poiſon to the ſouls of men, for any to ſpeak, as if they were ſpeaking to Adam before the fall, and to ſing thoſe ſinners aſleep in ſecurity, whom they ſhould endeavor to alarm, that they may be perſuaded to flee from the wrath to come. What betraying of their truſt, to entertain their people with an

affected display of their own talents, or idle speculations, to amuse the fancy, when they should be building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation? The very manner of preaching may be opposite to the doctrine of the cross, which hath so much humility and self-denial in it, as will inspire, and give a color, if I may speak so, to every word that is spoken by him that firmly believes it. On the whole, no other truth or duty will be neglected by a faithful minister: but the oftener he stands, as it where, in the centre of the plan, the more frequently he contemplates the cross of Christ, in which all the lines of divine truth are united, the more clearly will he see them, and the better will he be able to judge at what time and place to introduce them.

This leads me to observe, in the

3d Place, that to *declare all the counsel of God*, is to preach all the truths of God in their proper order and connexion. To allude to the similitude formerly used of making a portrait of a human body, every member must not only be in its just proportion, but in its proper place. In teaching every science, there is a certain order that must be observed, otherwise the labor will be in a great measure lost; but it holds in nothing more strongly, than in teaching religion, and opening the truths of the gospel. I might confirm this by many examples, or rather, indeed, by going through the whole system of divine truth, but shall only make a remark or two, for illustrating the observation. The necessity of salvation by Christ, is founded upon the lost state of man by nature. Unless the one is first established, the beauty and meaning of the other will wholly disappear; unless we are now in a corrupt and guilty state; unless man has indeed, lost the knowledge of the true God, the kindness of God to his peculiar people, the promises in the prophetic writings of light to the Gentiles, and the riches of divine grace in the gospel, spoken of in such magnificent terms, must all appear inconsiderable, and unworthy of regard. Unless you can convince men of their sins, and make them sensible of the holiness and justice of God, in vain will you preach the gospel to them; in vain will you call it "glad tidings of great joy

" to all people;" they do not underſtand the terms, they will deride the meſſage, and ſpurn the offered mercy.

If you preach the free forgiveneſs of ſin through Chriſt, without, at the ſame time, ſhewing the neceſſity of regeneration and ſanctification by his Spirit, it will either not be embraced at all, or it will be turned into licentiouſneſs. And, if you preach the duties of the law, without, at the ſame time, diſplaying the grace of the goſpel, and the vital influence that flows from the head to the members, you will either build up men in a deſtructive ſyſtem of Phariſaical religion and ſelf-righteouſneſs, or bring them under the Egyptian bondage, of making brick, though they are not furniſhed with ſtraw. The privileges and duties of the goſpel ſtand in an inſeparable connexion; if you take away the firſt, you ſtarve and mortify the laſt. Hear what our Lord himſelf ſays. John xv. 4, 5. " Abide " in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit, " of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, " except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the bran- " ches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame " bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do " nothing." I ſay the ſame thing of not inforcing the duties of the goſpel with the great and powerful motives drawn from its truths. You ſee in what a convincing and affecting manner the apoſtle Paul ſpeaks of his own conduct, and that of the other apoſtles, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. " For the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us, becauſe we thus " judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and " that he died for all, that they which live, ſhould not " henceforth live into themſelves, but unto him which " died for them, and roſe again." It is, doubtleſs, lawful, nay, it is for the glory of God, to make occaſional mention of every argument againſt ſin, drawn from nature, reaſon, and experience, to ſhew that, " the law is " holy, the commandment holy, juſt, and good." But let us not hope to make conſcientious, active, fruitful Chriſtians, any other way, than by teaching them to live " the life that they live in the fleſh, a life of faith on the " Son of God, who loved them, and gave himſelf for " them."

All who know the grace of God in truth, will desire to have this connexion between one truth and another, and the influence of truth on duty inviolably preserved. It is, indeed, common with some to alledge, that the friends of the gospel, those who are attached to the doctrine of redemption, are enemies to the law, and that they do not love to hear their duty preached to them. I look upon this as an unjust and detestable slander, and commonly spread by those who know nothing of the subserviency of the law to the gospel, or rather who understand very little either of the one or the other. If a minister preaches the holiness of God's nature, with whom evil cannot dwell; if he preaches the duties of the moral law, in all the force of its unchangeable obligation, and all the terror of its awful sanction, in order to convince his hearers, that they are liable to wrath, I know no sound Christian who will find fault with it: nay, I am persuaded, that ministers, who love the doctrine of salvation by grace, do often preach the moral law in such terms, that many legal persons are ready to tremble at the hearing of it; for they willingly use the words of the apostle Paul, Gal. iii. 10. "For as "many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; "for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not "in all things which are written in the book of the law "to do them." But if serious persons hear the duties of the law, preached as the grounds of their acceptance, and the foundation of their peace with God, it is no wonder that they say, after an approved example, "if righteous- "ness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Again, if a minister preach the duties of the gospel, explain them in all their extent, and press them by arguments drawn from the New Testament, as the fruits of faith, as the evidences of their change, as a debt of gratitude to their Redeemer, as the marks of their relation to him, and necessary to fit them for his presence, I believe it will not be unacceptable to any of his people. On the contrary, they do usually both approve and delight in these sermons which are most searching to the conscience, and most clear and explicit in the trial of their state. Titus iii. 8. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that

" thou affirm conſtantly, that they which have believed in " God might be careful to maintain good works: theſe " things are good and profitable unto men." It is our duty to ſhew, not only that profeſſing Chriſtians ought to be holy, but that they muſt be holy; and that if they live and die the ſlaves of any known ſin, Chriſt, and all that he hath done, ſhall profit them nothing, but only aggravate their condemnation. I will bear this teſtimony to my own hearers, that, as it was always a principle with me, to preach the doctrines of redemption where they are, and not to attempt to find them where they are not, by a boundleſs allegorical interpretation; ſo theſe ſermons, which have been wholly employed in explaining and enforcing particular duties, opening their principles, diſtinguiſhing them from their counterfeits, and preſſing them upon the conſcience, have met with as much approbation, and been heard with as little ſuſpicion as any whatever. But if any miniſter had preached in ſuch a manner, as to ſet the doctrine of ſalvation altogether aſide, and to ſuppoſe that we could obey in our own ſtrength, or that God was indebted to us for our works, inſtead of our being indebted to him, both for ſtrength to perform them, and mercy to accept them, I believe it would not have paſſed without cenſure; and I ſincerely pray, that the time may never come, when it will, in any corner of this church, but eſpecially from the pulpit in which I now ſtand.

The deluſion and abſurdity that finds place with many, deſerves the greateſt pity. It is not uncommon to hear certain perſons pouring out the bitterеſt invectives in pulpit and converſation againſt others, as enemies to morality, as turning the grace of God into licentiouſneſs, as not only neglecting, but even oppoſing the obligation of his law. In the mean while, if you hear the firſt, you ſhall rarely meet with any thing but what is quite looſe and general, a declamation on the beauty of virtue, and the neceſſity of holineſs, or a very imperfect ſketch of the offices due from man to man in the common intercourſe of ſocial life. And, if you hear the other, it is probable you may hear many of the hard ſayings of the goſpel, not only the neceſſity of doing juſtice, and loving mercy, with the cer-

fain damnation of those who hold unjust gain without restitution; but the necessity of loving God above all created comforts, habitually directing every part of our conduct to his glory, and being sincerely and without reserve, submissive to his providence. You may also, probably, hear the duties of every relation descended to with a particularity, and the neglect or breach of them reproved with a severity, that is no where else to be found. Now, I desire to know which of these are the greatest friends to morality. So strong is the deception, that I have known several of the hearers of the most boasted moral preachers, who could not avoid betraying, by their discourse, that they considered the exercises of piety, as no part of morality, and very consistently, indeed, with these principles, treated them with the most absolute neglect.

I have little hope of the conviction, but would gladly, if possible, stop the mouths of gainsayers on this subject. Is it not usual to mark out the friends of salvation by grace, under the title of extraordinary strict, and eminent professors; generally, indeed, with a view to challenge the sincerity of that profession, and load it with obloquy and reproach? But consider, I pray you, with what propriety you give them the name of professors? what is it that they profess? It is, that they are nothing in themselves and deserve nothing at the hand of God but wrath for their sins; that they have no hope of acceptance, but by the free grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ; that they can do nothing of themselves that is good, but by the grace of God, are what they are; so that there is no room left for them to glory. Is not this their faith and persuasion? Why are they then called professors? You are the professors, who make your boast of the law, and glory in the excellence and perfection of human virtue. Shew us then your faith by your works; justify your profession by your practice; boasting will bring you little credit. But let us see who have the most sober, honest, holy, heavenly lives; these are certainly actuated by the best principles.

But, I must, in part, retract what I have said; for, after all, the servants of Christ are indeed professors. They

have taken on the holy profeſſion of the goſpel: and, in fact, any inſtance of irregular conduct in them is more obſerved, more deeply reproached, and gives greater offence than the very ſame in perſons of a different character. When they depart from their duty, and from ſtrictneſs of converſation, I give them freely up to the cenſures of their enemies; they have richly deſerved them, and therefore they ought to bear them. In the mean time, let me put thoſe in mind, who, in the midſt of their triumph, ſtigmatize them with the name of *professors*, that they do them, or rather their profeſſion, more honor than they are aware of; for they ſhow that they themſelves are ſenſible that ſuch principles ought to have produced holineſs in the converſation. So far as they reproach the ſinner, or the detected hypocrite, they do what is right, and it can ſcarcely be over done. But, when they take occaſion to bring a reproach on the *profession* itſelf, their very ſucceſs is a condemnation of themſelves; for that the groſs crimes of their own admirers, are leſs offenſive, is juſt becauſe their *profession* is leſs holy. Nothing would give me greater pain, than to underſtand that my doctrine were to the taſte of midnight rioters, ſwearers, and Sabbath breakers; and, if any ſuch are found among the admirers of moral preaching, their teachers could not do themſelves a greater honor, than by renouncing the connexion.

4th. Fidelity in declaring the whole *counsel of God*, implies preaching every truth in its proper ſeaſon. "There "is as Solomon tells us, a time for every thing under the "ſun;" and, where the truths of the goſpel are taught in their ſeaſon, it gives them a particular luſtre, as well as an uncommon force. That you may underſtand what I mean by preaching the truths of religion in their ſeaſon, you may obſerve, that, beſides giving with aſſiduity and care, the neceſſary inſtructions for every particular duty incumbent on perſons, families or congregations, the ſeaſon may vary, and the propriety and neceſſity of inſiſting upon ſome truths, may ariſe from two circumſtances;—the ſtate of religion among a people;—and the aſpect of Providence towards them.

1ſt. It may ariſe from the ſtate of religion among a people. Surely it is the duty of a miniſter to ſuit his inſtructions to the preſent and moſt preſſing neceſſities of his hearers; not to foſter their prejudices, but, with care and judgment, to correct them; not to pardon or overlook their prevailing errors, but to rectify them; not to bear with epidemic ſins, but with boldneſs and ſeverity, to reprove them. It will be ſeen, on the following head, that ſome of the greateſt difficulties that lie in the way of miniſters, and the ſtrongeſt temptations to unfaithfulneſs, come from this quarter. At preſent I ſhall only ſhortly illuſtrate the obſervation, and ſupport it by the practice of the apoſtles. We ſee, that, in ſpeaking either to perſons or churches, they took care to have a particular eye to their ſtate and character, and adapted their inſtructions, and even their expreſſions, to theſe circumſtances with the utmoſt fidelity, and the greateſt ſkill. Neither is there any way by which we can ſo well enter into the meaning of the ſcriptures, or perceive their beauty, as by conſidering the conditions and characters of thoſe to whom the ſeveral parts of them are immediately addreſſed. We ſhall alſo ſee a mixture of zeal and prudence in the holy apoſtles, when acting under the direction of the Spirit of God. What an admirable example have we of propriety and fidelity in the apoſtle Paul's diſcourſe to Felix, the Roman governor, when he deſired to hear him concerning the faith of Chriſt? We are told, Acts xxiv. 25. that he took occaſion to "reaſon of righteouſneſs, temperance, "and judgment to come." In ſpeaking to one, who had, probably, no other intention, in deſiring to hear him, than to gratify his curioſity, by obtaining a diſtinct account of the wonderful hiſtory of Chriſt, he thought proper to apply to all thoſe principles of natural conſcience which might be ſuppoſed, yet to retain ſome power over him. And if (as many judicious interpreters think) inſtead of temperance, we ſhould read continence, it was a bold and ſevere, yet well-timed reproof to him and Druſilla, who were then living in adultery. We cannot help alſo being ſtruck with the unſhaken boldneſs of the Apoſtle, who could ſpeak with ſo much freedom to the gover-

nor, in whose hands he was then as a prisoner, and before whom he expected soon to stand, and receive sentence from him as a judge.

You may also observe the apostle Paul's attention to, and concern for the particular state of the churches to which he wrote his epistles. The church of Corinth seems to have been greatly infested with divisions and contentions, and these unhappily inflamed by ambitious and factious teachers, under whom they were marshalled as so many leaders, and to whose name and interest they seem to have been more devoted, than even to those of their Master, 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4. "For ye are yet carnal: for "whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and "divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For, "while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of A-"pollos, are ye not carnal?" Against this the apostle writes with the greatest zeal and warmth, and, at the same time, with the greatest prudence. He shews how inconsistent it was with the spirit of the gospel, and how derogatory to the honor of Christ. He endeavors to make them sensible that the most able and faithful ministers were no more than instruments in his hand, and owed their success entirely to the blessing of God accompanying their labors, as in the same chapter, ver. 5, 6, 7. "Who "then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom "ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I "have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the in-"crease. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, "neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the in-crease." What deserves particular notice, is, that, in all probability, the mention of himself and Apollos here, was merely hypothetical, or to serve by way of example. The real heads of the parties in the Corinthian church, were other teachers than either Paul or Apollos, whom he did not chuse to name, but stated his argument in this less offensive and more convincing form. The truth is, there is no disorder in a church, that is harder to deal with, than a spirit of contention. Other sins may be reproved with severity, and you will be supposed to be in the exercise of your duty when doing so; but this will not allow

itself to be reproved, because it will not confess itself to be a crime, and is therefore often exasperated by the attempts to heal it. You may see sometimes a man of strife cover all under a flaming profession of religion, and yet conduct it in such a manner, that we may say of him, as the servants of Nabal said of their master, "he is such a son of "Belial, that a man cannot speak to him."

I might produce many other examples from the holy Scriptures; but these are sufficient, to shew that it is the duty of a minister to suit himself to the state of religion among his people, by with-holding nothing that is profitable, but particularly insisting on what is most needful. If any of the truths of the gospel are in danger of being neglected, if they are undermined by secret, or assaulted by open enemies, it is the duty of a minister to make frequent mention of them, lest they should be forgotten; and to support and confirm them, that they may obtain acceptance. If any duty is in danger of falling into disesteem, and a false shame makes many decline the practice, a faithful minister should stand forth an open and zealous advocate for its continuance. If any particular sin, or sins, prevail remarkably in a place, and appear to be gaining ground, it is the duty of a minister to beware of yielding to the stream, or seeking his own quiet by silence; on the contrary, he ought to double his diligence, and make the most resolute and vigorous opposition to the incroaching evil. Of all this, I suppose, you will clearly perceive both the meaning and the justice. These circumstances are the intimations of Providence, and point out, in the most significant manner, not only what is a part of a minister's work in general, but also what is the immediate will of God as to his present duty.

2dly. The proper season of insisting on particular truths may arise from the aspect of providence towards the church in general, or a congregation, family, or person in particular. You see the apostles constantly make use of the state of the church in their time, the number and violence of its enemies, to excite the servants of Christ to vigilance, to exhort them to constancy, and to exercise them to patience. They also seem particularly attentive to teach

their converts to make uſe of the conſolations of the goſpel with this view, Rom. viii. 18. "For I reckon, that "the ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to "be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in "us"—and the ſame chapter, verſes 35, 36, 37. "Who "ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? ſhall tribula- "tion, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, "or peril, or ſword? (As it is written, for thy ſake we "are killed all the day long; we are accounted as ſheep "for the ſlaughter.) Nay, in all theſe things we are more "than conquerors, through him that loved us." Impending calamities of ſuch an alarming nature that they ſpeak, as it were, of themſelves, and afford the nobleſt opportunities of awakening the attention, and moving the affections, of bringing the careleſs to conviction, and ſtirring up the holy to watchfulneſs. In times of public danger too the ſelf-ſeeking miniſter throws off the maſk, and deſerts the cauſe, while the faithful who remain, are neceſſarily animated with uncommon zeal.

But a different aſpect of Providence calls alſo for inſtruction in ſeaſon. In times of public quiet and ſecurity, there is the greateſt reaſon to dread, and, by conſequence, to guard againſt indifference and formality in religion, on the one hand, or unneceſſary contention about it on the other. When the profeſſion of the goſpel is at any rate ſafe, and in ſome degree profitable, the church is always incumbered with a dead weight of cuſtomary Chriſtians, who receive their religion from their fathers, and continue to tread, as it were, in the beaten path. It is no eaſy matter to ſhake their ſecurity, when every outward circumſtance conſpires to increaſe it. And as the ſpiritual ſlumber takes hold, in ſome meaſure, even of thoſe who are alive unto God, it is no trifling taſk to exerciſe diſcipline, at once with prudence and with firmneſs, and to preſerve the life and power of religion, when every thing is ſtiffening into form. It is very eaſy, indeed, when there is a hard conflict between health and corruption, in the body of Chriſt, that is to ſay, in his viſible church, for one, or a few members, to pour out complaints againſt thoſe who govern it; to lay to the charge of miniſters

thoſe abuſes which are the grief of their hearts; and, all at once, to ſet about making a new model according to their own fancy. But I apprehend it is a much better, though a more difficult duty, to obey the Redeemer's counſel, to "be watchful, and ſtrengthen the things that remain and "are ready to die." Alas! how often do the new diſorders that break out in ſeparating ſocieties, betray the naughty materials of which they are compoſed. They are much in the ſame way as the fool who ran away from his own ſhadow, but run where he would, it was as ſoon there as he. They run away from the corruption of human nature, and they ſhall never be quit of it, becauſe they carry it with them.

There is one other temptation which I ſhall briefly mention, as almoſt inſeparable from a ſtate of outward quiet in the church of Chriſt. Thoſe, if I may ſpeak ſo, who keep their garments clean, as to the *sins*, are ſcarcely able to bear up under the *trials* of the times. When they ſee one attempt after another, for the revival of truth and righteouſneſs, defeated by the ſtrength of corruption, they are in danger of impatience and fretfulneſs againſt Providence, and ſometimes are even tempted to call in queſtion the reality of religion altogether; as if it did not meet with that ſupport and countenance, from the great Ruler, which they think is its due. But the moſt common danger is, that of falling into a deſpondent neglect of duty, of not doing what they ought, becauſe it has not hitherto had the affect which they deſire. In ſuch a caſe, no doubt, it is the duty of miniſters to fortify them, by giving proper views of the wiſdom and ſovereignty of Providence; by ſhewing the paths of God towards his church, in ancient times; and that theſe have, in every age, been the complaints and fears of good men, from the weakneſs of their faith, and the imperfection of their knowledge. It was the complaint of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. lxxix. 4. "We are "become a reproach to our neighbours, a ſcorn and deri-"ſion to them that are round about us." But it led him to prayer for the revival of religion, as well as the proſperity of his country, verſe 5. "How long, Lord, wilt thou "be angry forever? ſhall thy jealouſy burn like fire?"

and, in the 8th and 9th verſes, " O remember not againſt " us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies ſpeedily " prevent us: for we are brought very low. Help us, O " God of our ſalvation, for the glory of thy name: and " deliver us, and purge away our ſins for thy name's " ſake."

But the courſe of Providence, towards the church in general, is not only to be obſerved and improved, but whatever is remarkable or ſingular, in particular congregations. I ſhall not dwell upon examples of this, becauſe it is my purpoſe to put it into practice, and by that means, to illuſtrate it in the application of this diſcourſe. Let it ſuffice to ſay, that thoſe truths, or exhortations, which are founded on the viſible ſtate of Providence, carry a degree of evidence and weight with them, that is peculiar to themſelves. Known characters and ſcenes illuſtrate the deſcription, facilitate the application, and increaſe the conviction. I do not mean the expoſing of particular perſons, by the introduction of ſingle and recent facts. But if a miniſter is able with judgment and propriety, to reflect light upon divine truth, by pointing out the evil conſequences of ſin in general, the cauſes of the prevalence of one ſin more than another, and the inſenſible changes that are produced in the manners of men, by the change of their outward condition, it is certainly his duty; and when the ſtate of his own people furniſhes the opportunity, if he would ſpeak the word in ſeaſon, he ought not to let it paſs.

To theſe obſervations I only add, that, in the whole courſe of private parochial duties, a faithful miniſter will ſpeak the truths of God in their proper ſeaſon. If in family viſitation, or private and perſonal admonition, he hath not a particular view, either to their character, as far as it is known, or their ſtate in providence, however excellent or important his inſtructions may be, in other reſpects, he declareth not the whole counſel of God. But if he is truly actuated by a deſire of being uſeful, and keeps this circumſtance in his eye, with what readineſs will he communicate inſtruction to the ignorant, conſolation to the diſtreſt, and reproof to the obſtinate? He will recommend

to the rich, humility and liberality; to all who are in poverty patience and induſtry; to parents, aſſiduity in teaching and government; to children, obedience, attention, and ſubjection; and to ſervants, integrity and faithfulneſs in their truſt; or, in the language of the Holy Ghoſt, as a wiſe ſervant, "he will give to every one his portion of "meat in due ſeaſon."

5. In the laſt place, *declaring the whole counsel of God*, implies preaching the truths of the goſpel, honeſtly and boldly, without reſpect of perſons. I am perſuaded the apoſtle Paul, who was himſelf ſo remarkable for an undaunted courage in his Maſter's cauſe, had this, amongſt other things, in view, when he ſays, he had not *shunned* to declare the counſel of God. There are few temptations more dangerous to a miniſter, than the fear of man. Such is the malignant enmity of the wicked againſt the good, that he may ſuffer injury from them in his name, his ſubſtance, and even this perſon. Againſt his danger our Saviour has warned his diſciples in the following paſſage, Luke xii. 4. "And I ſay unto you, my friends, be not "afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no "more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom "you ſhall fear: fear him which, after he hath killed, hath "power to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto you fear him." It is remarkable, that in the prayers recorded in ſcripture, as offered up by the apoſtles, for divine aſſiſtance in their ſacred office, as well as thoſe paſſages in which they aſk the prayers and interceſſion of their fellow Chriſtians, this circumſtance is almoſt never forgotten. Boldneſs and reſolution was what they ſaw they ſhould always ſtand in need of, Acts iv. 29. "And now, Lord, behold their threat-"nings, and grant unto thy ſervants, that, with all bold-"neſs, they may ſpeak thy word." Eph. vi. 18. 19. "Praying always, with all prayer and ſupplication, in the "ſpirit, and watching thereunto, with all perſeverance "and ſupplication for all ſaints: and for me, that utter-"ance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth "boldly, to make known the myſtery of the Goſpel.

The trials of the apoſtles were indeed in this reſpect uncommonly ſevere; but, even ſetting aſide the caſe of

open perſecution, there is great reaſon for miniſters to guard againſt that fear of man, which bringeth a ſnare. As their hearers are of all different ranks and degrees, they ought, with the utmoſt impartiality, to preach the duties incumbent upon, and reprove the ſins that cleave to men of every ſtation. As they ſpeak in the name of God, and carry a meſſage from the King of kings, they ought to do it with the dignity that becomes an ambaſſador from him. They ought not to be diſmayed at the preſence of the moſt high and mighty of their fellow ſinners, when they remember the continual preſence of him before whom "mean men are vanity, and great men are a lie." I know, my brethren, that there is a reſpect and deference due to men, according to their ſtation, and that a conſcientious Chriſtian will give them the ſubjection that belongs to their rank, and authority in civil life, "not only "for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake." But this does not hinder him, who watches for their ſouls, to give them faithful warning, and, where it is neceſſary to debar them from the ſeals of God's covenant, leſt they ſhould at once profane his ordinance, and ruin their own ſouls.

I ſay, and I pray you to attend to it, *ruin their own ſouls*; becauſe I know not a greater injury that can be done to the great, than that conſtant adulation that is paid to them, and that indulgence to their faults, which, by weakening the reproofs of conſcience, tends to hinder their repentance and reformation. I take this opportunity to ſay, that if eternity is of any moment the great are not to be envied, but pitied. Some are hindered by intereſt, and ſome by fear, from dealing plainly and faithfully with them; and it is wonderful to think how much the opinions and conduct of others blinds them as to the ſtate of their own ſouls. It is recorded, to the honor of an ancient biſhop, that for an act of cruelty he debarred the emperor himſelf from the Lord's table. I know there are many who would pronounce this, immediately, the act of an ambitious and aſſuming prieſt; but it will always be, in my eyes, a revered example of honeſty and faithfulneſs in a miniſter of Chriſt.

II. I proceed, now, to the second thing proposed, which was to consider the difficulties which may lie in a minister's way, and tempt him to *shun* any part of his work. These are very various, and not easy either to enumerate or describe. What hath generally made the greatest impression upon me, either from experience or observation, I shall dwell upon a little: it may be reduced to the three following heads,——Sloth or worldliness in ourselves,—— the prejudices of our people,——and the opposition of our enemies.

1. Sloth or worldliness in ministers, themselves, may tempt them to shun some part of their work. You will see, from the preceding observations, that the work of a minister is both extensive and difficult. It requires the greatest intention of mind, the application, so to speak, of the whole man. It requires judgment to lay down the plan, diligence and perseverance to carry it into execution. Now slothfulness, and a love of ease or pleasure, to which we have all too great a bias, must be a very dangerous temptation; to evade some part of the duty, or slur it over in a slight or careless manner. There is a very great difference between doing our work in some sort, or so as to avoid punishment from our superiors, especially at a time when the reins of government are not held very hard, and doing it with that zeal and application which a concern for the glory of God, and love to the souls of men, should habitually inspire. We have all reason to be ashamed, that the important objects we have in view, and the interesting subjects we have to treat of, do not put an edge upon our spirits, and deliver us from that lazy unconcerned manner, which is equally dishonorable to God, and hurtful to the souls of men. I take the liberty to observe, that slothfulness is very incident to persons of considerable abilities; instead of being excited to improve their talents, they are inclined to trust to them. Finding, by experience, that they can do tolerably with but little pains, they soon come to content themselves with next to none. Perhaps I might apply here the common observation, that as few know their own weakness, so as few know their own strength, or what

they might do by the conscientious improvement of their natural powers. We have seen many examples of persons of weak capacity, who, by the help of piety and diligence, have done every part of their ministerial duty, in a manner far superior to those of much greater talents, whose heart did not lie to their work.

The danger of sloth, as a temptation, will appear, in the strongest light, from what has been said, on the fidelity of a minister in declaring *all* the counsel of God. He may not only deal with a slack hand, and do his work imperfectly; but, as it consists of very different parts, he may chuse the easier, and leave the harder. He may apply chiefly to what is most pleasant to himself, or what gives him the greatest opportunity to shine in the eyes of others, while he neglects those parts that are more burdensome to the flesh. The danger of this is the greater, that those parts of a minister's work, to which a slothful mind is usually most reluctant, are also those, the neglect of which can be most easily palliated or concealed. And, indeed, it is wonderful to think what ingenious excuses men will invent for the neglect of those duties which they have no inclination to perform. I have often heard ministers endeavor to prove, that visitation of families, which doubtless is a very fatiguing, was also a very unprofitable and unnecessary piece of service, than which, I think, there never was any thing more manifestly false. It is not only, when executed with fidelity, of great immediate use, in itself, but, by giving a minister a thorough knowledge of his people, enables him to perform every other part of his work with the greater propriety and success. A minister ought to be like a servant, wholly at his master's disposal, who has no choice as to his work, but is ready to obey what God, in his Providence, shall see fit to command him.

I joined worldliness with sloth, because they are near of kin, and commonly co-operate one with another. It is not my intention, in any part of this reasoning, to point out those who are wholly unfaithful, and mean no more but to shear the fleece, without caring for the flock; but to shew how those sinful dispositions, which, in part, take

place in every one of us, if they be suffered to gather strength, may obstruct us in our duty. Too many worldly cares, or too much indulgence of worldly pleasure, must be a very dangerous temptation to those who are intrusted with the care of souls. The apostle Paul says of himself, that he was "separated to the gospel of God," so is every minister of Christ. A prudent attention to his necessary provision, indeed, and ordering his affairs with discretion, is not only lawful, but highly useful and expedient; as it frees him from anxiety, and gives him greater liberty of mind for prosecuting the ends of his calling. But for one, appointed to labor in holy things, to be either sordidly covetous, or from interested ambitious views to follow worldly occupations, is certainly either a sacrilegious breach of trust, or an unreasonable and offensive distrust of God.

2. Another very great difficulty, which often lies in the way of a minister, arises from the prejudices of his people. It would be idle to suppose, that ever we shall find a people, among whom there are no mistaken notions, or unjust prepossessions, which it is our duty, with prudence, but at the same time with honesty, to withstand. As no congregation can expect to meet with a perfect minister; so no minister should expect to meet with a faultless congregation. If there were any such, there would be little need of a minister at all. You are to observe, that I do not here chiefly intend that bias and propensity to sin, which is natural to us all, which reigns in the wicked, and struggles for indulgence in the good; and which, therefore, calls for "doctrine, reproof, and correction, "and instruction, in righteousness." Though I must observe, that even with regard to this, when any sin is common and prevalent in a place, when it has long kept possession, and has been generally overlooked; if a minister sees it his duty to reprove it with severity, and especially if he will not tolerate it without censure, he may expect no little difficulty and opposition. There are many who will complain of him as too rigid, and impute to ill-nature, and indiscretion, what arises from the dictates of conscience, and a sense of duty. By bearing open testimony

againſt the introduction of faſhionable amuſements, or conformity to the world, he will often incur not only the hatred of the profligate, but the diſapprobation of thoſe prudent compliers, who are at once aſhamed to approve, and unwilling to oppoſe any ſinful relaxation.

But what I had chiefly in view, was, to mention theſe prejudices that may prevail, with regard to religion; and which may be of ſuch a nature, as a miniſter may be under a neceſſity not only of refuſing to comply with, but of oppoſing in the moſt direct and poſitive manner. If any error or miſtake, of conſequence, prevail, either among his people in general, or any part of them, either among the high or the low, the learned or the vulgar, he muſt endeavor to deſtroy it. There may be indeed prejudices of ſo trifling a nature, that, though he will never approve them, it is better entirely to overlook them; or in things that are merely indifferent, though unneceſſary, according to the apoſtolic example, of "becoming all things to all "men," it may be his duty ſometimes to comply with them. But this is not the caſe with any thing that affects the ſubſtance of religion, as to all which, if he attempt to pleaſe men, he is not the ſervant of Chriſt. Now, how great a difficulty muſt often ariſe from ſuch circumſtances? he is unwilling to loſe his place in the eſteem and affection of his people, in general, but eſpecially of thoſe whom he reckons to be the diſciples and friends of Chriſt. Yet this he muſt ſometimes forfeit for a ſeaſon, unleſs he will ſin againſt God, and thereby deſtroy his own peace. The beſt way for a miniſter to ſupport himſelf, in ſuch a ſituation, is, to remember, that as to his integrity before God, and the comfort of his own mind, the leſs regard he pays to the judgment of men, ſo much the better; if God be for him, it ſignifies little who be againſt him. And as to his uſefulneſs, he may ſafely commit it to God in his providence, who will certainly take care of it. Since he will not have it preſerved by ſinful compliance, he can eaſily reſtore it after it hath been a ſhort time ſuſpended, for conſcientious oppoſition. The truth is, an unſteady perſon, ſhaken by the breath of popular opinion, is unworthy of filling the ſtation of a miniſter of Chriſt. As he ſhould

not be terrified by the threatenings of the great, neither ſhould he be overcome by the clamors of the multitude. And if neither humor nor intereſt, but conſcience, has indeed been his guide, he may reſt aſſured that God, infinitely wiſe, will "bring forth his righteouſneſs as the "light, and his judgment as the noon day."

My brethren, I thank God, that I ſpeak this from a conviction of the general truth, more than from having ſuffered much in this reſpect in my own experience. I ſhall mention to you, however, one example, that I may illuſtrate the remark, and, at the ſame time, further diſcharge my own duty. It hath always ſeemed to me of great moment, to preſerve juſt views of the ſacraments, which are the ſeals of God's covenant, and the appointed means of the confirmation and comfort of his own people. Without mentioning, however, the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, I have found the greateſt difficulty in preſerving the ſacrament of baptiſm from profanation, and from that comparative diſregard under which it now lieth. This ariſes not only from the laxneſs of diſcipline in general, but from ſome miſtakes and prejudices on the ſubject of religion. It appears to me a thing undeniable, that both ſacraments are the ſeals of the ſame covenant, require the ſame terms of admiſſion, and operate to the benefit of the receivers upon the very ſame principles; that is to ſay, according to the excellent words of our Catechiſm, "Not from any "virtue in them, or in him that doth adminiſter them, but "only by the bleſſing of God, and the working of his Spi-"rit in them that by faith receive them." The only difference is, that, in the Lord's ſupper, every believer acts for himſelf perſonally; in the ſacrament of baptiſm, when adminiſtered to infants, the parent acts as a repreſentative, and ſponſor for his ſeed. None, therefore, ought to be admitted to baptiſm, more than to the Lord's ſupper, who have not a credible profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and, in the judgment of charity, or rather the judgment of men, may be ſuppoſed real Chriſtians. Yet, is it not certain, that many, who are juſtly excluded from the Lord's table, and ſome who never aſked admiſſion to it, do inſiſt on preſenting their children to baptiſm, and are pleaded for by not a

few of better character, who cry out againſt the refuſal, as an injury to the child, beſides other bad conſequences ſometimes pretended?

The chief complaint is, that it is a pity the child ſhould ſuffer for the fault of the father. This is the very error and prejudice in religion, which I think it my duty to oppoſe. It ariſes from a remaining degree of Popiſh ſuperſtition, to look upon the ſacraments as ſpells, or charms, which have ſome effect independent of the exerciſe of faith in the receiver. The ſacraments, my brethren, are not grace, but the means of it; they are not faith, but are appointed for the confirmation and growth of it. They belong to believers alone. They are ſeals of God's covenant; but they cannot ſeal that which was never made. It is juſt as if a man, who wanted to make a purchaſe from me, whoſe terms I had utterly rejected, and refuſed to give him my poſſeſſion, ſhould, notwithſtanding, perſiſt in writing out his contract, and ſigning it. Would this be of any effect? A contract is a ſure title to the bargain, where the conſent of both parties is aſcertained; but where one of theſe is wanting, it is abſolutely void, and of no effect. Infants cannot receive the ſacraments, by exerciſing faith themſelves; they have no right to receive the ſign at all, but as they are the ſeed of believing parents by profeſſion. Neither do they receive any real benefit from it, but when they are the ſeed of thoſe who believe ſincerely. If it be allowed, that an unbeliever, who receives the bread and wine at the Lord's table, receives no benefit to his own ſoul, how can it be imagined, or ſuppoſed, that an unbelieving parent, in baptiſm, can firſt receive, and then convey benefit to his new born child? His coming there at all, in ſuch a ſtate, is a preſumptuous profanation of a holy inſtitution. Now, though I can conceive eaſily, and do believe firmly, that many bleſſing are conveyed to children by an act of duty in their parents, I can neither conceive nor believe, that they can receive any advantage from an act of profanity and diſobedience.

The children of wicked parents, then, can receive no benefit by baptiſm, but what they would have whether they were baptized or not, viz. that they are brought up

among professing Christians, and by that means have some opportunities of knowing the truths of the gospel. And I cannot help thinking, it would, in the course of providence, be an inducement to them to attend more seriously to what they are taught, if they considered themselves as no members of the visible church, till they understood the terms of admission, and desired it as their own choice. The case is very different with the children of real believers; they have a right to all the promises that are made to the seed of believers, as such, by that God who "sheweth mercy to thousands of generations of them "that keep his commandments." Some, I believe many, think that they are doing honor to the sacrament of baptism, by representing the rite itself as of so great necessity; but it is precisely that sort of honor that the Papists do to it, by causing midwives and physicians instantly to baptize the children that are in a weak state, or by running to the beds of the sick, with a little of the consecrated wafer, and putting it in the mouth of a person either wholly insensible, or, perhaps, already dead. Our fathers, in the purer times of this church, whose institutions and practise, the longer I live, I do the more esteem and revere, in the most absolute manner, prohibited all private baptism. Their great reason for this was to prevent the very abuse I have been speaking of, viz. the superstitious notion of the necessity of the outward rite to salvation, without a due attention to the manner of receiving it. And, indeed, it was their only reason; for they, who were so great enemies to the consecration of places, and the holiness of stones or timber, could never think that baptism, administered according to Christ's appointment, was invalid for being done in a private house, and not in a church, or in the presence of a small, rather than a numerous assembly.

These things, by brethren, which I have often mentioned occasionally, I have now repeated, and will add to them, that I think there is something very incongruous, at least unsuitable, in admitting any parent to present his child in baptism, whatever be his character in other respects, who has never asked admission to the Lord's table.

Consider, that in the administration of baptism, the parent is constantly taken bound to command his children, so soon as they come to years, to renew their baptismal engagement in their own persons. Now, what consistency is there, in allowing a man to pledge his faith solemnly to God and his church, that he will command his child to do that which he habitually neglects to do himself. The pretence of fear, and unpreparedness for the Lord's table, is a condemnation of those who offer it, because it shews, that they suppose the one sacrament requires a different character or easier terms of admission than the other. After all, the above prejudices seem to me so deeply rooted with many, that they will not probably be soon destroyed; but I think it is the duty of every minister, in that, and all such cases, to speak his mind plainly, and, to the utmost of his power, to act consistently and uniformly, though he should suffer by the slanders both of the ignorant and profane.

3. The last difficulty which I shall mention, as lying in the way of ministers, is the opposition of their enemies. No faithful minister can expect to be without enemies. In a private character, and retired way of life, a man may, by very great prudence, and particularly by silence and forbearance, in a great measure, escape the resentment or injuries of violent men. And to be as little embroiled with others as possible, is both our interest and our duty. "If it be possible," says the Apostle, "and as much "as in you lieth, live peaceably with all men." But it is certain, from long and invariable experience, that there is such enmity and rancor in the hearts of wicked men against all who are in good earnest about religion, that they may lay their account with continual opposition, and continual slander. This our Saviour teaches his disciples to expect, and shews them, that it is the necessary consequence of their relation to him, John, xv. 18, 19, 20, 21. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it "hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love "his own; but, because ye are not of the world, but I have "chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant "is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted

" me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my " saying, they will keep your's also. But all these things " will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they " know not him that sent me."—The apostle Paul also bears his testimony to the same truth, 2 Tim. iii. 12. " Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall " suffer persecution."

But, if wicked men are injurious to the children of God in general, their malice must be particularly whetted against a minister, so far as he does his duty. He is placed in a public station, and is obliged to be active in his Master's cause. Time-serving or neutrality, as to the interest of religion, is commendable in none, but it is unpardonable in him. He must bear testimony openly and resolutely against vice and wickedness. And reproof, when administered with severity, is certain of making either a friend or an enemy. A faithful minister will not suffer Satan's kingdom to be at peace; and, therefore, it is no wonder, that, when they are gnawing their tongues with pain, they should pour out their venom against him, who gives them so much disturbance. The effect of reproof, in kindling the rage and malice of the guilty, was never better described than in the account of the trial and martyrdom of Stephen, particularly Acts vii. 54. " When " they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and " they gnashed on him with their teeth."

There are many ways by which the enmity and opposition of wicked men to the truth may prove a temptation to a minister: a few of which I shall mention, as I hope the distinct knowledge of them may be profitable to you in the way of caution: 1st, As one of their chief weapons is contempt and derision, he may be in danger of concealing or perverting truth, in some degree, in order to avoid it. When the gospel of Christ was first published, the doctrine of the cross, we are told, was " to the Jews a " stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." The same truth, in its simplicity, is still treated with scorn by profane and worldly men. All that relates to it is considered as weakness and absurdity; and the minister, who insists upon it, must lose his character with many for cap-

city and judgment. Is not this known to be true in daily experience? Are not such immediately stigmatized as weak and babbling creatures? Now, it is not altogether an easy sacrifice for a minister, to be indifferent as to the opinion formed of his parts and sufficiency, to wait till time shall do him justice, or to be altogether unconcerned whether it ever do him justice or not. It is no trifling thing to become *a fool* in the eye of the world *for Christ's sake*, and *not to be ashamed of his cross*. It may make many avoid such subjects, at least, more than they ought, or, perhaps, attempt to give them a polite or modish dress, which, of all others, is the most unsuitable to them; or it may make others go to the opposite extreme, who, because they find that such truths will be despised, are at no pains to avoid adding to the offence, by a silly and contemptible, or a crude and indigested manner of handling them. I know not, indeed, a more difficult thing, nor do I know any thing more noble in a minister, than to "cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils," to be truly superior to the applause or censure of either one class or another of his hearers, and therefore to avoid a vain display of human art; but, at the same time, from a sense of duty to God, and veneration for his truths, to be at all due pains to treat them properly, so as they may appear with light and evidence to the understanding, and come home with force upon the conscience. Such a man will bring forth the doctrines of the gospel in their own unadorned majesty and native simplicity; he will not consider himself as preaching *before* his hearers as critics; for what are they to him in this view? but he will consider himself as preaching *to* them as sinners, and pleading with them as immortal creatures, tottering upon the very brink of eternal perdition.

2dly. The opposition of enemies may tempt men of little courage to sinful silence for their own quiet. When vice is prevalent, it is also commonly insolent and resentful. Now, the hatred or ill-will of no person is desireable; and there are a thousand ways in which any person of a revengeful spirit may be hurtful. There are also very few so unconnected, but that they have many friends,

whose hatred is to be encountered as well as their own. The influence of this is but too much seen in every place. Offenders are often screened from reproof or censure, through fear of provoking them or their relations. Neither is it at all difficult to find palliating arguments, drawn from prudence, or other considerations, to make us think it is necessary to forbear. I believe this is very much the fault of the present age, and the greater and more general the relaxation of discipline in any age or place, the more difficult and dangerous it is for any one to step forth and assert its dignity and obligation. And yet I cannot help thinking, the great excellence of discipline, is its impartiality, not to respect persons in judgment. How can we defend ourselves, if we make one law for one, and another for another; if we censure the small, and forgive the great?

3dly. Ministers of weak minds may be apt to sink under the opposition of the wicked. It is said of Lot, dwelling in Sodom, that he was, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8. "—Vexed "with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that "righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and "hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with "their unlawful deeds." It certainly needs no small measure of fortitude and holy resolution, to persist in the discharge of our duty, notwithstanding the obstinacy of sinners, and to seek our comfort, under continual obloquy, from the approbation of him, that judgeth righteously. At the same time, I must say, that the friendship of wicked men is much more dangerous than their enmity; for the first brings with it the danger of seduction, and the last only exposes us to suffering, which, though itself is a species of temptation, as I shall immediately shew, is much less powerful than the other.

4thly. The opposition of wicked men may prove a temptation, as it may bring forth the remains of corruption that are in the hearts of good men, and make them sin, by imprudence or passion, if not by resentment. I have no where supposed that ministers are faultless in their conduct; they may, no doubt, err considerably in many circumstances, even when their intention, upon the whole,

is juſt and laudable. We ſee many examples of great imprudence, which we need not wonder at, when we conſider the difficulties with which they are every where ſurrounded, and the enemies that wait for their halting. If we conſider that Moſes, the meekeſt man on earth, ſpoke unadviſedly with his lips upon great provocation, we ſhall perceive it is but a part of the weakneſs of humanity, when we ſee others fall into the ſame ſnare. But, as to laſting reſentment, he deſerveth not the name of a Chriſtian, much leſs of a miniſter, who will continue to harbor it in his breaſt; he muſt love his enemies; he muſt bleſs them that curſe him, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe him, and perſecute him. This is not merely a thing amiable and excellent, but of the moſt abſolute neceſſity; for our Saviour ſays expreſsly, "If ye forgive not "men their treſpaſſes, neither will your heavenly Father "forgive you your treſpaſſes." And, bleſſed be God, there is nothing difficult or burdenſome in this part of a Chriſtian's duty. There is no ſuch victory over evil, as overcoming it with good. There is no ſuch conſolation under the injuries of ſinners, as requiting them by prayer. It compoſeth the ſpirit; it purifieth the heart, and authorizes the believer to put his truſt in God, and ſay with the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxvii. 1. "The Lord is my light and my "ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the Lord is the ſtrength "of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid?"

III. I proceed now, in the laſt place, to make ſome practical improvement of this ſubject; particularly, by giving you my parting advices in the ſpirit of this paſſage, and to the beſt of my judgment, in a manner ſuited to your ſituation. But, before I do this, in the

1ſt Place, Let me beſeech every ſinner in this aſſembly, to hearken to the meſſage of the goſpel, and to believe in the name of the Son of God, "that, believing, they may "have life through his name." This is the ſubſtance of *the counsel of God*, "that Chriſt died on the croſs to ſave "ſinners, and that there is no ſalvation in any other." You are bleſſed who hear the joyful ſound, but infinitely more bleſſed, if you lay it to heart, and, renouncing every

other claim, reſt your dependance upon this Saviour. What ignorance doth it ſhew, if you truſt in yourſelves, that you are righteous? Will you be able to ſtand before God in judgment? It is to him you muſt anſwer, and from him you muſt receive your ſentence. You may eaſily, indeed, ſtifle theſe reflections for a time, and bury every apprehenſion, in the hurry of worldly buſineſs, or the intoxication of worldly pleaſure; but all theſe things are coming quickly to an end. After a few more turns in this vain world, the body muſt be laid in the duſt, and the ſpirit muſt go to its own place; that is to ſay, either the manſions of glory, or the place of torment. I ſay theſe things to you, my brethren, with all plainneſs. They need no additional force of language to give them weight. It is an amazing proof of the deceitfulneſs of ſin, that we are ever able to forget them. It is wonderful, indeed, that ſinners are able to ſleep in quiet, and to indulge themſelves in worldly pleaſure, while they are ſuſpended by nothing but the frail thread of life over the bottomleſs pit. Gladly would I make uſe of every circumſtance that could have any effect in carrying home theſe truths upon the conſciences of all here preſent.

If that of my being now ſpeaking to you, for the laſt time, in all probability, while in the body, can be of any uſe, I pray, let it not be forgotten. But is it not ſtrange, that a circumſtance of this nature ſhould excite ſo much curioſity and attention, and things that happen every day, of the ſame or a like nature, ſhould be ſo little improved? It is not, indeed, every day that a miniſter is removed from his charge; but there are not many days, in which ſome of his people are not removed from this ſtate of trial. Many are hearing a farewell ſermon, though not to the miniſter, yet to themſelves, when they little think of it. I would, therefore, earneſtly beſeech all who are, or have reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves to be in an unreconciled ſtate, to turn from their tranſgreſſions, that they may live; to lay hold of the mercy of God through Chriſt, for their pardon; and live, by faith, on his promiſed ſtrength, for their ſanctification.

2dly, Notwithſtanding this general addreſs, I have a few words to ſay to the looſe and profligate. I am ſorry to think, that, in a place like this, of no very great extent, there ſhould be ſo many daring ſinners, who ſet every thing ſacred at defiance. It hath been obſerved, and I believe with truth, that the profane among us carry it with a greater degree of hardineſs and inſolence, than in places of ſuperior note, and where, probably, they are in much greater numbers. I believe it may be, in part, owing to this circumſtance, that they are better known; ſo that they muſt either be open profligates, or not profligates at all. There is no medium; the ſhame cannot be avoided: and, therefore, it muſt be overcome; ſince they will not be reſtrained, and cannot be concealed, it lays them under an unhappy neceſſity of keeping profanity in countenance. Perhaps alſo another reaſon may be, that, not being tied by any principle of conſcience, they are alſo deſtitute of that ſenſe of decency which has a conſiderable influence on the outward conduct of thoſe of higher rank. But, whatever be the reaſon, their ſtate is to be pitied. Let me beſeech all ſuch, to conſider the terrible effects of vice which are every day to be ſeen. Remember, I pray you, how many have fallen a ſacrifice to drunkenneſs and luſt! Can you ſay deliberately, in a ſober moment, that there is any profit in your choice? Is there any pleaſure in reflecting on ſcenes of riot and diſſipation? I know not whether to recal to your memory thoſe whom death has taken away, or point out to your obſervation thoſe who are ſuffered to remain. What a melancholy ſight is an old worn-out ſinner, who has broken his conſtitution, tainted his character, and waſted his ſubſtance! You let us ſee well enough in what manner you chuſe to live; but I would gladly know in what manner you chuſe, or indeed, in what manner you expect to die. You cannot live always. Some of you cannot live long. Suppoſe you had time given you for reflection on a death bed, or children to whom you would leave a few words of advice. Could you ſay to them, "O! my dear children, the many de-" lightful nights that I have ſpent in roaring, and ſwearing, " and obſcene jeſting! O the delicious hours that I have

" ſpent in brothels among harlots! It gives me pleaſure " to think that you will follow ſo good an example, and " revive the memory of your Father's conduct. Guard " againſt every thing that may tempt you to forſake it. " Beware of thoſe cunning prieſts that would ſeduce you " to religion?" Are ſuch ſentiments, my brethren, to the laſt degree, inſupportable? Are they almoſt improper to deſcribe? What then muſt be the life that lays an evident foundation for them? Why are you ſo impatient of the reproofs or admonitions of thoſe who bleed inwardly for your folly? It is not inclination, but duty, that prompts us. No man would provoke your rage and violence, if he could avoid it. Think then, I beſeech you, on your condition, and pray that God, for Chriſt's ſake, may grant you repentance unto life.——The wicked having received warning,

I muſt now endeavor to execute what I chiefly intended in the cloſe of this diſcourſe, by giving you ſome advices, as a people making profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and obedience to him. They will all, or moſt of them, conſiſt of what I have frequently taken notice of occaſionally, and have now only ſelected as matters of general moment.

1. Let me beſeech you to do your utmoſt to underſtand the goſpel well; but let it be always accompanied with practice, and applied to promote the power of the ſpiritual life. I would have your taſte exerciſed to diſcern good and evil. Endeavor, by reading, hearing, and meditation, and you may add mutual converſe, to underſtand the doctrine of ſalvation, by grace, in all its parts. Learn to know the meaning of forgiveneſs being free, viz. that the ſinner is juſtly liable to wrath; that Chriſt hath purchaſed, and God, of his infinite, unmerited mercy, has offered a full pardon to the chief of ſinners, and grace to form them for his own ſervice; that it is their duty to accept of it; that it is their intereſt to rely upon it; and that it is at their peril if they deſpiſe it. That for a ſinner to think he muſt firſt do ſome things that are good, in order to found his title to this very mercy, is injurious to the riches of divine grace, and the way to retard, if not to

prevent his reformation. The renewing of his nature is a part of Chriſt's purchaſe; and, therefore, not to be performed by him as a condition, but accepted as a promiſe; nor does he truly receive Chriſt for ſalvation, unleſs he receive and ſubmit to him in all the characters with which he is inveſted, as ſent of God, viz. Prophet, Prieſt, and King. Holineſs, or new obedience, is the fruit of faith. A real believer keeps the commandments of God by the ſtrength of that grace that is treaſured up in Chriſt, and watchfully obſerves his temper and practice, as the evidence of his change, and tending to ſhew that he is indeed an habitation of God through the Spirit. To have evangelical principles, is, by no means, to neglect the commandments of God; but to deny our own righteouſneſs and ſtrength, and obey, without glorying in that obedience. And that this is the juſt and ſcriptural view of the matter, I think, is undeniable, on this ſingle account, "that it is God that worketh in us to will, and to do of "his good pleaſure." If every thing that is good in us is the work of God, it is abſurd to repreſent it as the condition of his favor; for it is the effect of his grace. By ſetting the thing in this light, we ſhall perceive, that the freeneſs of ſalvation, is not, in the leaſt degree, giving liberty to ſin, or taking away the neceſſity of holineſs. Is it not juſt as neceſſary, if it muſt be received as a gift, as if it were to be performed as a condition? Is it not juſt as neceſſary when incorporated with faith, as when divided from it?

This ſyſtem of goſpel truth, my brethren, I would have you to underſtand, ſo as both to diſcern and diſapprove what is contrary to it; but I would have you to underſtand it, in order to produce union with God, habitual and chearful obedience to his laws. In recommending the connexion between faith and practice, I mean to guard you againſt two things diſtant from one another. The one is habitual untenderneſs of conſcience. There are certainly ſome who are either real, or at leaſt pretended friends to the doctrine of the goſpel, on whoſe hearts it never yet hath taken hold. They plainly and habitually live in the practice of ſin, and therefore are of

thoſe who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs. I am indeed of opinion, that they never had any other than a cuſtomary traditionary belief. They are found becauſe it is the mode where they live to be found, and not from any inward perſonal conviction. In the mean time, they are a reproach to their profeſſion, and cannot be treated with too great ſeverity, by thoſe who wiſh well to the goſpel.

The other miſtake I would guard you againſt is, a ſpeculative religion. It is good to be well inſtructed in doctrinal truths; but there is often a danger of going too much into controverſy. We have ſeen many inſtances of ordinary Chriſtians, who, when they had attained a conſiderable degree of knowledge, and were able to ſpeak with fulneſs and propriety, on religious ſubjects, gave themſelves up to a litigious and wrangling diſpoſition, which was ſoon followed by a barren, and ſometimes an offenſive practice. The ſame thing alſo frequently leads to innumerable little parties and factions, into which Chriſtians, I mean real Chriſtians, are divided, which very much hinder their own profit, and grieve the hearts of thoſe who are one with them in Chriſt. Therefore let it be your care to apply the truths of the goſpel for your own ſanctification and comfort. After you have believed them, be ſtill more careful to live upon them, than even to defend them. Diviſions ſhould never be made without abſolute neceſſity; and when they are made, they ſhould be as ſoon as poſſible forgotten, that having eſcaped ſin we may apply ourſelves to duty; for controverſy, be the ſubject what it will, I think, is not very favorable to the power of godlineſs.

2. Deſire a faithful miniſter, do your utmoſt to obtain him; and then let it be your habitual ſtudy to profit by him. You have reaſon to be very thankful that your ſituation, in providence, is ſuch as you may expect a miniſter who is a hearty friend to the goſpel, and, at the ſame time, one who is agreeable to your own choice. Let me exhort you, as far as you are conſulted in that matter, to make the choice with much calmneſs and prudence; to look for one, not only ſound in his principles, but of thorough knowledge and capacity, always preferring ſolid

before ſpecious parts. After having made the choice, endeavor to ſtrengthen his hands, and encourage his heart, in the Lord, by a careful attendance on his miniſtry, and by a dutiful ſubmiſſion to inſtruction and reproof. You ought not to wiſh for one who will flatter you, nor ought you to lay ſuch a temptation in a miniſter's way, as to ſhew that you are pleaſed with being flattered. The beſt teſtimony that you can give to a miniſter is, to learn from him, and to obey him. This is infinitely better than noiſy praiſe and admiration, according to the excellent remark of biſhop Burnet, 'That it is not the beſt ſermon 'that makes the hearers go away talking to one another, 'and praiſing the ſpeaker; but that which makes them go 'away thoughtful and ſerious, and haſtening to be alone.' Has a miniſter any evidently profane perſons among his hearers; if he cannot preach them from ſin to God, it were much more for his credit to preach ſo as that they are not able to hear him, but flee away for eaſe to their conſcience, than to have them continue in wickedneſs, and yet praiſe him every day, for an admirable ſpeaker, or an able man.

If you would truly profit by ordinances, after you have a fixed paſtor, I think it is of moment to forget, as much as poſſible, the perſons of men, and conſider them as no more than inſtruments in the hand of God, for your daily inſtruction and comfort. The more you remember the appointment of God, and wait upon his ordinances, in the faith of his preſence, and the expectation of his bleſſing, the more you are likely to receive both ſenſible and laſting benefit. I muſt therefore take the liberty to obſerve, that we have amongſt us a ſet of wandering unſettled hearers, who run about from one congregation to another, and even from one profeſſion to another, and are ſcarcely ever to be ſeen a whole day in one place. If they be but deliberating where to fix, we may ſay of them, that they are ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth. But the probability is, that they have itching and curious ears, and go about not to ſerve God, but to hear men. If I am able, at all, to judge, either by reflection or obſervation, thoſe are moſt likely to profit, who, having

deliberately made their choice, ſit habitually and regularly under one miniſter. By theſe means they enter into his views; and as he will naturally endeavor, if any thing was wanting at one time, to complete his ſcheme by ſupplying it at another, they will thereby have a more comprehenſive view of the whole counſel of God. At the ſame time, not having the charm of novelty to enchant them, they will have nothing to do but to reap inſtruction. On the other hand, by hearing ſeparate, detached, and independent diſcourſes, men may pleaſe their fancy more, but they will improve their underſtanding leſs. It is alſo plain, that as every miniſter will endeavor, not only to follow an order in his diſcourſes on one ſubject, but to have a reſpect to the connexion, and relation of the ſubjects themſelves, the more accurate and exact he is, in ſuiting one part to the illuſtration of another, the leſs he will be underſtood by theſe deſultory hearers, who take only a ſingle branch, without being able to perceive its ſubſerviency to the general deſign. I have many times known exceptions taken at miniſters, for ſome parts of a diſcourſe, by ſuch perſons, when, if they had heard the whole upon the ſame or correſponding ſubjects, they would have perceived there was no place for their objections. The great purpoſe, my brethren, of a ſerious and judicious people, in attending on ordinances, ſhould neither be to pleaſe themſelves, nor to criticiſe their teachers; but to hear the word of God, that they may do it. On this account it is, that humble and regular Chriſtians are getting real advantage to their ſouls, while ſome are only watching the opinions, or others only paſſing judgment on the ability, perhaps no more than the ſtyle, and outward manner of the ſpeaker.

3. I muſt give you another advice, as a profeſſing people, to guard againſt the introduction of a worldly ſpirit. I have often obſerved to you, that every ſituation a perſon or people can be in has its peculiar temptations, as well as trials. This place, engaged in commerce and traffic, growing in numbers, and I ſuppoſe growing in wealth, is in great danger of a worldly ſpirit, and of importing, if I may ſpeak ſo, faſhionable vices, inſtead of

real improvements. While I say this, I would not be understood as being against a liberal education, and elegant manner of life, or any thing that is truly becoming in an advanced rank. There is no more religion in being fordid, than in being sumptuous. But I think the spirit of the gospel is such, that it will dispose a truly pious person to be rather late than early in adopting new ornaments; rather sparing than excessive in dress, furniture and equipage; and careful not to be conformed to that vanity of the world which we renounced at baptism. Let men defend one practice after another, as they please, I shall always expect to see something which a careless worldly person will do, but which a good man will not do.

However, not to keep entirely in generals, I must once more give my public testimony against what was lately attempted to be brought in here, equally contrary to the law of the land, and the precepts of the gospel, the pernicious entertainments of the stage. The best and wisest men in all ages have born witness against them, as the great means of corrupting the morals of a people; and I am certain, they must be of all others most hurtful to the inhabitants of this place, the far greatest part of whom live by daily labor. I look upon it as the indispensible duty both of magistrates and ministers, to do all in their power, to prevent the introduction of what may betray the young and unsuspicious into the destructive paths of vice, or the lower class of mankind into an idle and dissolute life. Much good of this kind may be done in matters of outward order, by a firm and resolute behaviour in those who are in place and authority. I must also here take particular notice of the duty of sabbath sanctification. I do hereby warn you against that most pernicious refinement of gadding abroad, paying private visits, upon the Lord's day. Whoever knows any thing of the obligation of family government and instruction, must be sensible that to receive promiscuous company on that day, is to render it utterly impracticable. Besides, the vain and unprofitable, and sometimes sinful conversation, that prevails in such cases, must greatly weaken, or entirely obliterate any serious impressions, made upon your mind, during the service of the

ſanctuary. Chriſtians, is not the reſt of the ſabbath, from worldly cares and purſuits, a conſolation to your own ſouls, as well as a happy opportunity of doing ſervice to the ſouls of others? why then will you ſuffer yourſelves to be robbed of it, by the impertinent intruſions of idle or ill diſpoſed perſons? Let your houſes be ſacred on that day, as well as your churches; and endeavour to prepare your minds, and thoſe others members of your families, for an eternal ſabbath in the world to come. This leads me, in the

4th Place, to exhort you to be careful and conſcientious in family government, and inſtruction. How inexcuſable are thoſe parents and maſters, who ſuffer their children and ſervants to periſh for lack of knowledge? What unſpeakable advantages do you enjoy, having all the force of natural affection, as well as natural authority, to give your inſtructions weight? How many have remembered, with pious gratitude, through a whole life, the benefit they have received frrom family inſtruction and example? I know I ſpeak to many who are accountable to God for this mercy; how ſhall you anſwer it then, if you do not give the ſame advantage to your own families; And how ſhall they anſwer to God, think you, who have baniſhed the worſhip of God from the families in which they found it? One would think, the lifeleſs walls and furniture of your chambers might be awakening monitors. There is the greateſt mutual influence between family and perſonal religion. Perſonal religion is the foundation of all family and relative duties. It would be ſpeaking to the deaf to perſuade any to watch over the ſouls of others, who have no concern for their own. But wherever there is a deep impreſſion of the importance of eternity for ourſelves, this will naturally and neceſſarily ſet before us its importance with reſpect to all that are dear to us. On the other hand, for the ſame reaſon, family religion is one of the beſt and ſureſt evidences of the reality and the ſtrength of perſonal religion. It is ſometimes obſerved, that ſome very pious perſons are extremely defective in this particular, and take little care of the inſtruction, and ſtill leſs of the government, of their children. If they are

truly pious, it is a very great blemish upon their piety. However, for my own part, I confess I do very much suspect the sincerity of religion, in those who are remarkably negligent in this particular, let them profess as much as they will. I know that pious persons, from the weakness of their judgment, will be guilty of great imprudence in the manner of family instruction, and from an absolute incapacity, may not be able to preserve their authority; but I cannot easily reconcile with true piety, the absolute neglect of either the one or the other.

I must add, that I take family religion, and the careful discharge of relative duties, to be an excellent mean of the growth of religion in a man's own soul. How can any person bend his knees in prayer every day with his family, but it must be a powerful restraint upon him from the indulgence of any sin which is visible to them? Will such a person, think you, dare to indulge himself in anger, or chuse to be seen by them, when he comes home staggering with drunkenness, unfit to perform any duty, or ready to sin still more by the manner of performance? When I figure to myself a master of a family, who had come home sotted like a beast, and half-supported to his house, rising in the morning, I am not able to conceive how he can bear the looks of those members of his family who had been witnesses of his shame. But besides being a restraint from gross crimes, I cannot help saying, that, speaking of the things of God, with the concern of a parent, of the humanity of a master, must give a solemnity of spirit, and a sense of their moment, even greater than before. A man cannot speak to purpose, without feeling what he says; and the new impression will certainly leave behind it a lasting effect. Let me, therefore, my beloved hearers, earnestly recommend to you the faithful discharge and careful management of family duties, as you regard the glory of God, the interest of his church, the advantage of your posterity, and your own final acceptance in the day of judgment.

5. Let religion be incorporated with your lawful employments, and improved by an attention to the whole course of Providence to you and yours. Nothing is more

hurtful to religion, than to confine it to particular times and places: I should have rather said, there is not a greater mistake in religion, than to imagine that it can be so confined. True religion will shew its influence in every part of your conduct. It is like the sap of a living tree, which penetrates to the most distant boughs. In your ordinary calling, see that you undertake nothing but what is lawful in its end, and endeavor to accomplish nothing by any but by lawful means, that you may have always the comfort of a conscience void of offence. Nay, you should even do more; you should endeavor to act so single and sincere a part, as to be beyond the imputation of fraud, that all who know you may put the most unbounded confidence in your integrity. There are many other calumnies which we may naturally expect from a malicious world; and it ought to trouble us very little to hear them: but it must be extremely distressing to a good man to be but suspected of dishonesty. Oh, my brethren! how often hath it grieved me to see, that many persons, formerly of a decent character, when they lost their substance, lost their religion with it; and, indeed, to consider how few, when they were reduced in their circumstances, could satisfy the public that they had acted fairly.

Let it be your care, I beseech you, to remember, that it is God that giveth you power to get wealth; and what thanks are due to him, if he hath given you abundance, especially if he hath given you withal a heart to bestow. Be diligent in your business, from a principle of conscience; and make it the daily subject of your prayer to God, that he would either keep you from the shame of poverty, or, at least, from the sin of it. Take notice of every step of his providence, whether of mercy or trial. Let the aspect of providence direct your exercise, and quicken your affections in religious duties; and take such views of the fullness of an all-sufficient God, in acts of worship, as may prepare you for every event of providence, whether prosperous or adverse.

Thus, my brethren, I have now finished what I proposed, in the way of advices; and, for what I have to say with regard to the present dispensation of providence, that

puts an end to my miniſtry among you, I ſhall bring it within very narrow bounds. It were eaſy, by ſaying a few words, to move the concern both of ſpeaker and hearers: this I have hitherto choſen to avoid; and, therefore, ſhall only ſay, that I am deeply ſenſible of the affection and duty of the congregation that attended my miniſtry, and others under my charge. I cannot expreſs my ſenſe of it better, than in the words of the late eminently pious Doctor Finlay, my immediate predeceſſor in this new office, who, on his death-bed, ſaid to thoſe about him, 'I 'owe a long catalogue of debts to my friends, which will 'not be put to my charge; but I hope God will diſcharge 'them for me.' I cannot now do any thing better for you, than again to beſeech you, to remember and put in practice the directions I have given you, and, I am perſuaded, that it ſhall go well with you. The only further requeſt I have to make to you is, that you would give to me, and my family, an intereſt in your prayers. Intreat of God, that we may be preſerved from perils and dangers, and carried to the place of our deſtination in ſafety; and that I may be aſſiſted of him in every future duty, and not fall under the terrible reproach, of agreeing to make ſo diſtant a removal, and then being found unfit for the important taſk. ——I conclude with the words of the apoſtle Jude, 24, 25. "Now, unto him that is able to keep you from fall-"ing, and to preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of "his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wiſe God, "our Saviour, be glory and majeſty, dominion and pow-"er, both now and ever." Amen.

MINISTERIAL CHARACTER AND DUTY.

SERMON 43.

2 COR. iv. 13.

We also believe, and therefore speak.

TO underſtand what ought to be the character, and what principles ſhould animate the conduct of a miniſter of the Goſpel, cannot be without profit, even to a private Chriſtian. It will teach him whom to prefer, when he is called, in providence, to make a choice. It will teach him to hold ſuch in reputation for their office ſake, and to improve the privilege of a regular goſpel miniſtry, if he himſelf is favored with it. And I think it muſt incline him to make daily ſupplication to the Lord of the harveſt, to ſend forth faithful laborers into his harveſt.

But though there were no ſuch general advantage to be derived from it, my particular charge, and the very aſpect of this audience, would eaſily juſtify me in making this, for once, the immediate ſubject of diſcourſe.

Now, if we would know the character of a faithful miniſter, we cannot better, or more immediately reach our purpoſe, than by looking into the character, and obſerving the conduct, and ſprings of action, of the apoſtles of our Lord, who received their commiſſions immediately from

himself, and were not only the first, but the best and most successful ministers, that ever were employed in the church of Christ.

The Apostle Paul, whose call was so singular, and whose labors were so distinguished, has, in his epistles to the several churches, planted or watered by him, given us a great light into the chief aims he had in the exercise of the ministry. In this chapter, and the preceding part of this epistle, he shews the Corinthians, with what visible faithfulness and sincerity he had acted, and what diligence he had used in promoting their eternal happiness.

To save time, I forbear going through the connexion of his discourse, and only observe, that in the words of our text, he shows what kept him faithful and influenced him to so much diligence in the work to which he was called, by alluding to an expression in the 116th Psalm. It is written, *I have believed, therefore have I spoken. We also believe, and therefore speak.* In this he intimates, that our inward persuasion of the great truths of the everlasting Gospel, could not but have a powerful influence upon him and others, to press the important message, and watch over the souls of those committed to their charge.

In discoursing further at this time, I intend to confine myself to this single truth, which may be easily deduced from the text: That one of the most essentially necessary, and the most extensively useful qualifications of a good minister, is, that he be a good man, that he have a firm belief of that Gospel he is called to preach, and a lively sense of religion upon his own heart. After I shall have explained and confirmed this observation, I will conclude with some practical reflections.

Though I have mentioned real religion as one of the most essentially necessary qualifications, I am not ignorant, that taking the words in a strict sense, gifts are more necessary to the being of a ministry, than even grace itself. To make the efficacy of the ordinances to depend upon the inward state of the administrator, is a Popish error, and is expressly guarded against by the Assembly of Divines, in our shorter Catechism, in the following words:

The sacraments, and it is equally true of every other ordinance, *become effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them, that by faith receive them.*

But some degree of capacity is evidently necessary in the most absolute sense. A man who is altogether void of knowledge and utterance, or who is deaf and dumb, may be a saint, but cannot be a minister. This concession, however, takes nothing from the force of the observation, that real religion is of the greatest importance, and most absolutely necessary to the *faithful* discharge of a minister's sacred trust. That I may set this in as clear and strong a light as I am able, let me intreat your attention to the following observation.

I. Real religion in a minister will make him knowing, and able for his work. It is necessary for any one who intends himself for the office of the ministry, by diligent study, and the use of those means, with which God in his providence hath furnished him, to improve his understanding and acquire a stock of knowledge, that he may be a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the way of truth. In this he can have no such incitement as concern for his Master's glory. Nay, he that is truly religious, is taught of God, the best of masters, and will have some of his most profitable lessons from his own experience..

Let me the rather intreat your attention to this, that those who are most apt to disparage piety, are also apt to speak in terms of high approbation on the subject of literature and science.—Observe, therefore, that true religion serves both to give a man that knowledge which is necessary to a minister, and to direct and turn into its proper channel the knowledge which he may otherwise acquire. It is an approved maxim in every science, that practical and experimental knowledge far exceeds that which is merely speculative; at least, though the last may make the prettiest show, the first is by much to be preferred for use. Any wise man, if he was to go a dangerous

voyage, would readily prefer as his pilot, one who had much experience, and had failed often that way himself, to one, who had ſtudied navigation in the moſt perfect manner aſhore. So, my brethren, every man who regards his ſoul would chooſe for his *ſpiritual* guide, one, who appears to have the wiſdom to ſave his own, and would expect by him to be beſt directed how to avoid the rocks and ſhelves in his paſſage, through this dangerous and tempeſtuous ocean of life.

But if this maxim holds true in other ſcience, it holds yet more ſtrongly in Religion, which cannot be truly known unleſs it be felt. There is an inſeparable connexion between faith and practice, truth and duty; and therefore he that is a ſtranger to the one, is ignorant of the other. I am not inſenſible that a bad man may eſpouſe, and plead for a great part of the ſyſtem of divine truth; but as he cannot cordially embrace it, ſo I am inclined to think that he never truly underſtands it. The Apoſtle Paul declares, that it is only by the Spirit of God which is given to every real Chriſtian, and more eſpecially to every faithful Miniſter, that a man is enabled to treat rightly of divine things, "Now we have received, not the Spirit of "the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might "know the things that are freely given to us of God; which "things we ſpeak, not in the words which man's wiſdom "teacheth, but which the Holy Ghoſt teacheth, comparing "ſpiritual things with ſpiritual. But the natural man re-"ceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are "fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them, for they "are ſpiritually diſcerned." As the real Chriſtian from that character is beſt diſpoſed to ſeek after, ſo he is by the ſame means beſt fitted to improve and apply his knowledge of ſpiritual things. This will appear, if we conſider what ought to be the great work of a miniſter. He hath to do chiefly with the hearts and conſciences of his people. His buſineſs is to convince the ungodly; to awaken the ſecure; to enlighten the ignorant; to direct and ſtrengthen the weak in the faith, and in general as a wiſe phyſician, to adminiſter the medicine proper to the various conditions and diſorders of his hearers. Now it muſt, at firſt ſight,

appear, that he who is a ſtranger to the power of godlineſs, and knows nothing of the ſpiritual life himſelf, muſt be utterly unfit for diſcerning how it thrives, or aſſiſting and promoting it in others. That man muſt ſurely be moſt powerful in ſearching, and moſt ſkilful in guiding the conſciences of others, who has been accuſtomed to examine and direct his own.

I only farther obſerve upon this particular, that true religion will purify, and direct into its proper channel, the knowledge he may otherwiſe acquire. It is a great miſtake to think, found learning is an enemy to religion, and to ſuppoſe that an ignorant miniſtry is the beſt or ſafeſt. There is no branch of human knowledge of which a Divine may not be the better, or which a good man will not improve to the glory of God and the good of others; though ſome of them are more important than others; and it is neceſſary to give to any of them, only ſuch proportion of our time, as is conſiſtent with our great and principal aim. Now true religion is the great preſervative againſt miſtake or abuſe of any kind on this ſubject. A bad man is apt to ſtudy, merely to gratify his own fancy; and there is a falſe luxury and delicacy in feeding the mind as well as the body. A bad man is alſo exceedingly prone to intellectual pride and ſelf-ſufficiency; than which, there is not a vice more dangerous in itſelf, or more contrary to the character of a Miniſter of the New Teſtament. But he who is ſanctified by divine grace, as he has every motive to diligence in acquiring knowledge, ſo the ſingle purpoſe to which he will wiſh to apply it, is to ſerve God in the Goſpel of his Son.

II. Real religion in a miniſter will make him happy and chearful, ready and willing to do his duty. There is a great difference between the prompt, and ſpeedy obedience of a ſervant who loves his maſter and his work, and the reluctant labor of him who only deceives him, that he may eat of his bread. A truly pious man undertakes the office of the miniſtry from love to God, with a view to promote his glory, and what he hath counted his intereſt in the world: viz. the welfare of the ſouls of men. An unholy miniſter undertakes this employment only as a

trade to earn by, and has it at leaſt as his higheſt aim to promote his own worldly advantage. It is eaſy to ſee in what a different manner theſe different perſons will act, and in what different light they will view the ſacred duties of their function. He who truly believes the Goſpel and loves its Author, will reckon it his higheſt honor when he is called to recommend it to the belief of others. He will be apt to teach, and will find a pleaſure in carrying his meſſage, beſides the reward he expects from him who employs him, and will undergo with chearfulneſs every fatigue he is ſubjected to, in the execution of his office. On the other hand, he who is actuated by a contrary principle, though he is obliged, that he may raiſe his wages, in ſome ſort to do his duty; yet how heavily muſt it go on, how tedious and burthenſome muſt it be, both in preparation and performance? He will count his ſervice at the altar, and his work among his people, as a toil and drudgery, and reckon all that redeemed time that he can ſave for himſelf, from the duties of his office.

Perhaps it may be thought that their lies a ſtrong objection againſt this obſervation from experience; as it appears that ſuch miniſters as have leaſt of religion, commonly go moſt lightly under the charge, and are far from feeling any burthen in what is committed to them; whereas the moſt pious and faithful miniſters ſeem to have a weight upon their ſpirits, and ſuch a concern for the ſalvation of their people, as cannot but take much from their chearfulneſs in the work to which they are called. In anſwer to this, obſerve, that an unfaithful minſter is not eaſy and chearful becauſe his work is agreeable to him, but becauſe he takes as little of it as may be, and ſeeks his pleaſure more than his duty. Certain it is, that the work of the miniſtry muſt be irkſome and uneaſy to him that believes not, except ſo far as he makes it ſubſervient to ambition, and diſplays his own talents when he ſhould be feeding his people's ſouls. This I confeſs, which the apoſtle juſtly calls preaching ourſelves, may be abundantly gratifying to the moſt corrupt heart. On the other hand, that concern for his people which is upon the heart of every faithful paſtor, is far from being inconſiſtent with the

moſt ſolid peace and deſirable pleaſure ariſing from the diſcharge of his duty. It is like the exerciſe of pity and compaſſion to the diſtreſſed, in him, who is acting for their relief, which, though in ſome ſenſe painful, is yet accompanied with the approbation of God, and conſcience, as flowing from a rightly diſpoſed mind, and therefore to be cheriſhed and cultivated rather than ſuppreſſed. There is a time for every good man to mourn, and a time to rejoice, and perhaps the one is even more ſalutary than the other; for we are told, that God will appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, *to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

III. Real religion in a miniſter will make him faithful, and impartial, in the diſcharge of his truſt. The God in whoſe preſence we ſtand, and in whoſe name we ſpeak, is no reſpecter of perſons, and neither ſhould we be in doing his work. There is commonly a great variety of perſons, of different ſtations and of different characters, committed to the inſpection of a miniſter; the pleaſing or diſpleaſing of whom, has a conſiderable influence on his worldly eaſe and intereſt. This is a great temptation to be unfaithful, and often leads to ſpeak unto them *smooth things*, and *prophesy deceit;* or at leaſt, not to deal with all that freedom and impartiality, that his duty to God requires. In every unregenerate man, worldly intereſt in one ſhape or another, either vanity or gain, is the ſupreme motive of action: and therefore, as moſt men are impatient of reproof, it cannot be ſuppoſed, that an unſanctified miniſter will venture to provoke their diſpleaſure, or to gall them with unacceptable truths. The favor of the great, or the applauſe of the multitude, he certainly will ſeek, more than the edification of any. On the other hand, he who truly fears God, and believes what he teaches, will act with faithfulneſs and boldneſs. He will remember that if he ſeeks to pleaſe men, he cannot be the ſervant of Chriſt. He will therefore no farther obtain, and indeed no farther wiſh to obtain their favor, than as a diligent diſcharge of his duty approves him to their conſciences in the ſight of God; or forces the approbation of the impar-

tial, notwithstanding the resentment of particular offenders. It is only the fear of God, can deliver us from the fear of man. I do not pretend that all who fear God, are wholly delivered from it: but surely, bad men, must be far more under the government of this sinful principle. The one may fail occasionally, the other is corrupted wholly. There are two reasons which incline me particularly to insist on that faithfulness, which can only flow from true piety.

1. That preaching, in order to be useful, must be very particular, and close, in the application. General truths and abstract reasoning have little or no influence upon the hearers, as the ignorant cannot, and the wise will not apply them to themselves.

2. The other reason is, that private admonition, and personal reproof, are a great part of a minister's duty, and a duty that cannot be performed by any man, who hath not a steady regard to the presence and command of that God, who hath set him to watch for the souls of his people, as one that must give an account.

IV. Real religion in a minister, will make him active, and laborious in his work. Diligence is absolutely necessary to the right discharge of the pastoral duties, whether public or private. It requires no small attention and labor, to seek out fit and acceptable words, as the preacher expresses it, to stir up the attention of the inconsiderate, to awaken secure, and convince obstinate sinners, to unmask the covered hearts of hypocrites, to set right the erring, and encourage the fearful. An unbelieving minister must be careless and slothful. As he is unconcerned about the success of his work, he cannot have any great concern about the manner of performance. But he, who believes the unspeakable importance of what he is employed about, both to himself and to his people, cannot fail to be diligent. He knows that he himself must answer to God, for the care he has taken of the souls committed to his charge; and that if he does not faithfully warn the wicked to turn from their ways, their blood will be required at his hand.

Oh! my brethren, what a ſtriking conſideration is this, to ſuppoſe ourſelves interrogated by the Supreme Judge, concerning every ſinner under our charge? Did you earneſtly warn this unhappy ſoul, by earneſt exhortations in public, and by ſerious affectionate expoſtulations in private, to conſider his ways? It is an eaſy thing, by a partial, or curſory performance of our duty, to ſcreen ourſelves from the cenſure of our fellow-men; but to ſtand at the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, and anſwer there for our diligence, is a more awful trial.

Will not alſo a concern for his people's intereſt, animate a pious miniſter to diligence? If he is truly pious, as he loves God, he loves his brother alſo. The Apoſtle Paul ſays, *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.* If a man in good earneſt believes that everlaſting miſery muſt be the portion of all who die in an unrenewed ſtate, what pains will he not take, to prevent ſinners from going to that place of torment?

One who could ſee a fellow-creature, in the rage of a fever, ruſhing to the brink of a precipice, and not reſtrain him, would fall under laſting infamy. Muſt not the ſame compaſſion move the heart of a ſerious perſon, who ſees his fellow-ſinners going blind-fold to the pit of perdition?

It is their not believing theſe things, that makes them ſo fearleſs in ſinning; if you truly believe them, will you not make an effort to alarm them? There are no motives like theſe to diligence—he that believes will certainly ſpeak.

V. In the laſt place, real religion will make a miniſter ſucceſsful in his work. This it does, both as it fits him for doing his duty to his people, which has been illuſtrated above, and as it adds to his precepts *the force of his example.* Firſt, it makes him ſucceſsful as it fits him for his duty. It is true indeed, that God only can give the bleſſing upon a miniſter's labors, and that he can ſave by many, or by few, by the weakeſt, as well as by the ableſt inſtrument: yet we ſee from experience, that in all ordinary caſes, he proportions the ſucceſs, to the propriety,

or ſufficiency of the means. Neither is there any ſurer mark that God intends effectual benefit to any part of the world, or the church, than when he raiſes and commiſſions men, eminently qualified, to plead his cauſe. Therefore, real piety, even in this reſpect, contributes to a miniſter's ſucceſs. If diligence in all other things produces ſucceſs, it muſt be ſo alſo in the miniſtry. If he that lays out his ground with the greateſt judgment, prepares and dreſſes it with the greateſt care, has the moſt plentiful crop: if the ſhepherd that waits moſt diligently upon his flock, feeds them in the beſt paſture, and leads them to the ſafeſt ſhelter, has the moſt increaſe; then that miniſter, who does his duty moſt wiſely, and moſt powerfully, will alſo ſee moſt of the fruit of his labors.

But real, and unaffected, yet viſible ſeriouſneſs, has alſo its own proper additional influence on a miniſter's ſucceſs. An apparent and viſible impreſſion upon the ſpeaker's mind, of what he ſays, gives it an inexpreſſible weight with the hearers. There is a piercing heat, a penetrating force, in that which flows from the heart, which diſtinguiſhes it not only from the coldneſs of indifference, but alſo, from the falſe fire of enthuſiaſm or vain glory. Beſides all this, the example of a pious miniſter, is a conſtant inſtruction to his people. It ratifies his doctrine, while he not only charges them to do what he ſays, but to be what he is. This will receive much illuſtration from its country.

A miniſter who has a careleſs, untender walk, defeats, by his life, the intent of his preaching. Though in reaſon, it cannot juſtify any one in diſobeying wholeſome inſtructions, that the inſtructor deſpiſes them himſelf; yet it is one of the moſt common excuſes men make for themſelves, and few excuſes ſeem to ſet their conſciences more at eaſe. Looſe and careleſs perſons think themſelves quite at liberty to deſpiſe the reproofs of their paſtor, if, while he teaches others, he teaches not himſelf.

Nay, not only is it thus with the profane, but even thoſe who have the greateſt regard for religion, are not ſo much affected with the ſame truths, when ſpoken by one they think indifferent about them, as when ſpoken by

one who seems to feel what he speaks, and who lives as he teaches.

Experience greatly confirms the whole of this reasoning—for wherever an eminently pious minister has lived, and labored long, there is commonly to be found the most knowing, serious, sober-minded, and judicious people; nay, the very memory of such a minister, is often long continued, after he is gone, and his example is proposed by his hearers, to their children's children.

From all these considerations, I conclude, that the most important qualification of a good minister, is to be *a believing preacher*, and that if he saves his own soul, he will be the probable mean of saving them that hear him.

I proceed now, to make some improvement of the subject.

Reverend fathers and brethren,

As we would wish our people to do, let us take heed how we hear, and make a faithful application to ourselves, of what hath been said upon the subject. Let it engage us to a serious examination of ourselves, lest while we preach the gospel to others, we ourselves should be reprobates. This ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious thoughts, for several reasons. We are in danger of thinking ourselves too easily safe, by comparing that outward regularity, to which our office itself, even from secular motives, obliges us, with the licentious extravagance of profane sinners. We are in danger of mistaking our frequent thinking and speaking of the things of God, in the way of our calling, for an evidence of true religion in ourselves. We may also, perhaps, mistake those gifts with which God hath furnished us, for the benefit of his own people, as the fruits of the spirit, and of gracious dispositions in our hearts. A minister is as much liable to self-deceit as others, and in some respects, more so. We have therefore much need, often to make trial of our state, as well as to give all diligence, to make our calling and election sure.

But let us beware of imagining, that this discourse is only applicable to such, as have no real faith in Christ. God forbid that there were any minister among us, a com-

plete unbeliever, counting the Gospel a fable. But faith, and every other gracious disposition grafted upon it, are capable of many degrees of improvement and strength; and in proportion to the strength of our faith, and the impression we have of divine things, will be our diligence, and consequently our success, in the work of the ministry. Let us therefore impress our minds, with a more and more lively sense of the important truths which we teach and hear. Let us not starve ourselves, while we are feeding others: but study to arrive at a greater degree of love to God, and delight in him, a greater conformity to his blessed image, in purity of heart, and integrity of life. Let us in a special manner, study to attain to more and more intimate communion with God in secret, which is the sign of our dependance upon him, and the very exercise of love to him, which is the mean of constancy, and the source of joy in religion.

Above all, let us set our affections upon the things that are above, where our Redeemer sits at his Father's right hand. As our profession is to be pilgrims and strangers in the earth, to live by faith, and not by sight, let us study to raise our hopes of, and desire after, the heavenly inheritance. By this we shall not only believe, but know and feel the value of true religion, which cannot fail to make us diligent in seeking the good of others.

Oh! my brethren, what reason have we to be inwardly ashamed at the weakness of our faith, and the coldness of our love, as they show themselves, by our indifference in the duties of our office? We are often ready, both to complain, and wonder that our hearers are so little affected with the most awful considerations, that they can hear with indifference of everlasting happiness, and sit without fear under the denunciations of eternal wrath: that we cannot persuade them, it is of importance to think what shall become of them forever. But is it not also to be wondered at, that we ourselves can often speak of these things with so little emotion? Can we ever be sufficiently affected with the danger of our hearers, when we consider, that we must either save them by convincing and converting them now, or deliver our own souls, by wit-

neſſing, juſtifying, and perhaps pleading for their condemnation at the laſt day? However plain and ſimple theſe truths are, of the final judgment of miniſters and people, they are quite unfathomable in their meaning and importance to both. It is ſtrange that we can think of them without the deepeſt concern, or even ſpeak of them without tears.

Let us pray that the Lord would increaſe our faith, that believing we may ſpeak, and that our ſpeech may be with ſuch efficacy, by the bleſſing of God, as many ſinners may be thereby brought to everlaſting life; that we may approve ourſelves to him that ſent us; and that when Chriſt the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear, we may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

THE SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL ENTIRELY OF GOD.

SERMON 44.

1 CORINTHIANS iii. 5, 6, 7.

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

MY BRETHREN,

I HAVE been led to the choice of this subject, by that dispensation of Providence, which, though contrary to all human probability, hath brought me to this new charge of presiding over the instruction of youth, in the liberal arts. I find also that in the course of my attendance on it, I shall have frequent opportunities of preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God to you, of this congregation and neighborhood. Let me therefore beg your attention to the instructive passage which I have just now read, that both teachers and scholars, ministers and hearers, may preserve a just sense of their relation to one another, and

the common relation we all ſtand in to God. And particularly that in the diſcharge of our mutual duty of preaching and hearing, we may preſerve on our minds, a deep ſenſe of our dependance on ſuperior ſtrength, and may look for a bleſſing from the Father of lights, from whom alone it can poſſibly flow.

The text of itſelf and independent of its connexion, is ſo full of uſeful matter, that I am unwilling to ſpend your time by a long deduction of the particular circumſtances of the church of Corinth, which led the apoſtle to expreſs himſelf in the language contained in it. Let it ſuffice therefore to obſerve, that a ſpirit of pride and faction prevailed very much in that church, which had rent them into parties, denominated from this, or the other principal teacher who was, or had been among them. Thus in the 12th verſe of the firſt chapter, "Now this I ſay that every one "of you ſaith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of "Cephas, and I of Chriſt," and in the verſe immediately preceding the text, "For while one ſaith I am of Paul, "and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" Poſſibly the converts from among the Jews counted themſelves the diſciples of Peter, and held him in the higheſt eſteem, while thoſe of the Gentiles ſupported the name and credit of the apoſtle Paul, who firſt planted the chriſtian faith among the idolatrous heathens, and perhaps others who were much addicted to learning and philoſophy, admired, and extolled the eloquence of Apollos. And yet after all, perhaps the fierce and unchriſtian contentions that prevailed in that church, were not owing to their divided attachment to particular apoſtles, but to the ambitious and corrupt teachers, which were among themſelves. If this was the caſe, the apoſtle Paul only mentioned himſelf, Apollos and Cephas, by way of ſuppoſition, inſtead of naming the guilty heads of the contending parties, that the reproof being adminiſtered with ſo much prudence and delicacy, might be carried home with the greater evidence and force. This interpretation receives a good deal of countenance from what we find in chap. iv. 6. "And "theſe things brethren, I have in a figure transferred to "myſelf, and to Apollos, for your ſake; that ye might learn

" in us, not to think of men above that which is written, " that no one of you be puffed up for one againſt another."

Such a diviſion and factious temper does infinite miſchief wherever it prevails. It proceeds from people's being much under the power of a carnal mind, and exceedingly increaſes carnality by that envy, ſtrife, and diſſimulation, which it always produces. But the chief way in which it hinders the ſucceſs of the goſpel is, by leading men into the fatal miſtake of ſeeking or expecting to find in miniſters what can only be had in God, or aſcribing to inſtruments and ſervants, what is due only to their Lord and maſter. Would you perceive the greatneſs of this ſin? It is ſacrilegiouſly robbing God of his own honor and glory, in order to inveſt a weak ſinful creature with the ſacred ſpoils.

I only add one other preliminary remark. You may ſee the perfect conſiſtency and propriety of the apoſtle's conduct, according to the different circumſtances in which he was engaged. For this purpoſe we muſt compare his expreſſions here, with thoſe uſed by him when attempts were made to leſſen his character, and detract from the dignity of his office, as an apoſtle of Chriſt. On theſe occaſions he ſhews, that he knows very well what belonged to his ſtation in the church, and is ſo far from ſpeaking of himſelf in affected ſtrains of humility, that he freely vindicates his own conduct, and magnifies the honorable truſt that was committed to him by his Saviour. chap. ix. verſe 1, 2. " Am I not an apoſtle? am I not " free? have I not ſeen Jeſus Chriſt our Lord? are not " ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apoſtle to " others, yet doubtleſs I am to you: for the ſeal of mine " apoſtleſhip are ye in the Lord." Thus the apoſtle ſpeaks in vindication of his authority, when unjuſtly attacked. But when the queſtion is changed, and ſome are diſpoſed to extol him or any other, to the prejudice of his Lord and maſter, he changes his ſtile too, and ſpeaks in the humbleſt manner of himſelf, and any thing he had contributed or could contribute to the ſucceſs of the goſpel. As a faithful ſervant he could not endure that any ſhould put him in his maſter's place, and reject with indigna-

tion all that falſe honor which flowed only from the miſtakes and weakneſs of his fellow chriſtians.

In this as in many other inſtances, the occaſional directions given to the different chriſtian churches, in the early ages carry the moſt important and uſeful admonitions to us who live in the latter days. From the paſſage before us, we learn that miniſters ſhould conſider themſelves, and be conſidered by their people, as entirely ſubordinate to God, and expect aſſiſtance in their labors, and ſucceſs in their endeavors, only from himſelf. What I further propoſe, in dependence on divine grace, is firſt to illuſtrate and ſupport the propoſition juſt now laid down, and then to make a practical improvement of the ſubject, for your inſtruction and direction.

I. Firſt then, I am to illuſtrate and ſupport this propoſition, That miniſters ought to conſider themſelves, and to be conſidered by their people, as entirely ſubordinate to God, and expect aſſiſtance in their labors, and ſucceſs in their endeavors, only from himſelf. In the courſe of this illuſtration, it is my intention, at once, to point out the meaning and import of the propoſition, and to eſtabliſh its truth from ſcripture and experience. For this purpoſe I beg your attention to the following obſervations.

1. The ſucceſs of the goſpel depends wholly upon God, and to him alone muſt the glory of it be aſcribed, as it is he, who not only ſends and employs, but who furniſhes and qualifies all, whom he employs for promoting his ſervice. He not only gives the commiſſion to undertake, but he imparts the ability to diſcharge the truſt. This truth is manifeſtly included in the apoſtle's words, "Who "then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom "ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" He conſiders himſelf and others, only as miniſters, that is, as ſervants ſubject to the direction and authority of Chriſt their Lord and maſter, unto whom they are to be inſtrumental in carrying on the converſion of ſinners, and the edification and comfort of believers. This ſimilitude however of itſelf, does not fully come up to the truth the apoſtle would inculcate. A man who is but a ſervant,

and does every thing by the authority, and under the direction of his maſter, may yet have real and juſt ground, for valuing himſelf upon what he performs; in caſe, for inſtance he is poſſeſſed of uncommon talents, and an extraordinary capacity, to do his work to the beſt advantage, on this ſuppoſition, he is a treaſure to his maſter, the ſucceſs of whoſe direction may in a great meaſure be aſcribed to the ſervant's ſkill and ability in the execution. But to exclude every pretence of this ſort, the apoſtle ſubjoins what brings the alluſion fully up to his purpoſe; "even "as the Lord gave to every man." Miniſters are not only ſervants, but their very capacity and ability to ſerve God are received from himſelf, who divides to every man ſeverally, as he will. From this it is evident, that the glory and honor of the whole work, and the ſucceſs of every particular ſervant employed in it, is entirely owing to Chriſt their great Lord and maſter, 1 Cor. iv. 7. "For who "maketh thee to differ from another? and what haſt thou "that thou didſt not receive! now if thou didſt receive "it, why doſt thou glory as if thou hadſt not received it?"

Let us, my brethren, conſider and dwell upon this truth a little, for it is full of inſtruction, both to miniſters and people. That we may view it with the greater clearneſs and preciſion, let me obſerve, that there are two diſtinct kinds of qualities, which are each in their place, of great importance on the work of the miniſtry. (1.) The endowments of the mind, whether original and natural, or acquired by induſtry; theſe laſt being only the former improved and perfected by education and exerciſe. (2.) Holy diſpoſitions, which are of the utmoſt importance and neceſſity, to turn the other into their proper channel, and to give them force and influence in the application. Now both theſe are equally and entirely the gift of God, the firſt being indeed in ſcripture moſt commonly, in all their extent and diverſity, called gifts; but the others are the effect of the gracious and ſanctifying influence of the Holy Ghoſt.

(1.) All the endowments of mind, which fit a man for common or ſpecial ſervice, are the gift of God. Whatever capacity of talents, whatever natural advantages of

any kind, miniſters enjoy, it is plain, that they received them from God, and depend upon him for the continuance and uſe of them. He only endows them with knowledge and comprehenſion, to underſtand his ſacred truths: He only endows them with the talent of ſpeaking well, and enables them to communicate their knowledge to others, in an agreeable and acceptable manner, Exod. iv. 11, 12. "And the Lord ſaid unto him, Who hath made man's "mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the ſeeing, "or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, "and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou "ſhalt ſay." There is ſomething very noble, as well as inſtructive in theſe paſſages of ſcripture, which repreſent even the ſkill of the tradeſmen to be employed in adorning the viſible ſanctuary, as the gift of God, and the inſpiration of his ſpirit. Exod. xxxi. 1, 2, 3, 4. "And "the Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying, ſee, I have called "by name, Bezaleel, the ſon of Uri, the ſon of Hur, of "the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the ſpirit "of God, in wiſdom, and in underſtanding, and in know-"ledge, and in all manner of workmanſhip, to deviſe "cunning works, to work in gold, and in ſilver, and in "braſs." And again, Exod. xxxvi. 1. "Then wrought "Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wiſe-hearted man, in "whom the Lord put wiſdom and underſtanding, to know "how to work all manner of work for the ſervice of the "ſanctuary, according to all that the Lord had com-"manded."

Further, as it is the inſpiration of the Almighty, that giveth underſtanding both in a general and comparative view, ſo the improvement of natural parts by acquired learning, is no leſs to be aſcribed to him. As he gives the diſpoſition and ability, ſo it is he who by the courſe of his providence furniſhes the means, and preſents the opportunity of making progreſs. Let human efforts be what they will, if God do not ſmile upon them, they will infallibly be blaſted. An all ſeeing and ſovereign God has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation, and every perſon who will ſeriouſly reflect, may be ſenſible how all his purpoſes have

been controuled and over-ruled by the invifible direction of the great Difpofer of every event, who hath pointed out the paths in which he was to walk.

(2.) Let us alfo remember, that it is God who endows his miniſters with their brighteſt ornaments, viz. holy and gracious diſpoſitions, which ſerve to turn their other talents into the proper channel, and to give them force and influence in the application. I am ſenſible, my brethren, that gifts may be conſidered as more aſſiſtant to the being of the miniſtry, than even grace itſelf. We juſtly renounce the popiſh doctrine, that the efficacy of the ſacraments, or other ordinances, depends upon the intention or inward ſtate of the adminiſtrator. In oppoſition to this the Aſſembly's Shorter Catechiſm ſays juſtly, "the ſacra-"ments, (and it is equally true of every other ordinance) "become effectual to ſalvation, not from any virtue in "them, nor in him that doth adminiſter them, but only "by the bleſſing of Chriſt, and the working of his ſpirit in "them, that by faith receive them." A hypocrite cannot be a faithful, but he may be in ſome degree a ſucceſsful miniſter. I am perſuaded there are not a few now in heaven, who were converted and edified by the miniſtry of thoſe who have taken up their abode in the place of torment; an awful reflection this indeed, to thoſe who are intruſted with the office of the miniſtry. It brings to my mind a ſaying of an eminent and pious writer. Miniſters are in as great danger of deceiving themſelves as others, and in ſome reſpects greater, for they may be apt to miſtake their readineſs in thinking and ſpeaking of holy things, and thoſe gifts which God beſtows upon them, for the benefit of his choſen, for the fruit and evidence of gracious diſpoſitions in their own hearts.

But notwithſtanding all this, it is beyond all controverſy, that one of the moſt eſſential qualifications of a good miniſter is, that he be a good man. It is a very difficult, as well as it is a very dreadful thing, to preach an unknown Saviour. But where the love of Chriſt dwells and reigns in the heart, it gives ſuch attachment to his cauſe, ſo much love to his people, ſo much clearneſs and comprehenſion in underſtanding his truths, ſo great wil-

lingneſs, or rather deſire to communicate them, as cannot fail to have the greateſt influence on a miniſter's diligence, and at the ſame time gives reaſon to hope that he will ſpeak from faith to faith. Thus the apoſtle expreſſes himſelf, 2 Cor. iv. 13. "We having the ſame ſpirit "of faith, according as it is written, I have believed, "therefore have I ſpoken: we alſo believe, and therefore "ſpeak."

Now to whom is a miniſter indebted for his holy diſpoſitions? Who implanted in him that love to Chriſt, which inſpires him with zeal and fidelity in his ſervice? Take the anſwer in the words of the apoſtle, 2 Cor. iv. 5, 6. "For we preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus "our Lord; and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus' ſake. "For God who commanded the light to ſhine out of "darkneſs, hath ſhined in our hearts, to give the light of "the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus "Chriſt." It was the power of God that brought him again from the dead, and it is by the ſpirit of God dwelling in him, that he is daily ſanctified and enabled to adorn the doctrine of God, his Saviour, in all things. So that the fire of his miniſtrations, and the light of his example, and the joint influence of both, are to be ultimately referred, and will by him be moſt willingly and thankfully attributed to the power and grace of God, his Redeemer, of whoſe fulneſs we all have received, and grace for grace.

2. But in the ſecond place, the ſucceſs of the goſpel depends entirely on God, as it is he who gives efficacy to the inſtructions, even of the moſt eminent and beſt qualified miniſters, by the immediate ſupernatural operation of his ſpirit and grace. Let us ſuppoſe a miniſter endued with the fineſt natural parts, and theſe improved and cultivated, by all the advantages of human learning. Let him have the moſt acute and penetrating genius, the moſt lively imagination, the moſt ſolid judgment, the moſt charming and perſuaſive eloquence; in fine, let him have what alone is of more value than all theſe, an eminently pious and devout heart. With ſo many advantages he ſhall not be able to make one ſincere convert, unleſs almighty God be pleaſed to open the way by his divine

grace into the hearts and conſciences of the ſinner. It is not then merely by furniſhing the proper means and by the diſpoſition of his providence, giving them an opportunity of exerting their influence, that God promotes the ſucceſs of the goſpel, but by an immediate and powerful agency, diſtinct from, and ſuperior to every ſecond cauſe.

I have endeavoured to expreſs this with the greateſt fulneſs, and the greateſt clearneſs, as a truth of the utmoſt importance. While we believe the uſe and neceſſity of means and ſecond cauſes, we ought never to ſeparate them from, or forget their ſubordination to God. There can hardly be a nobler illuſtration of this truth, than the apoſtle has given us in the text, by a natural ſimilitude. "I "have planted," ſays he, "Apollos watered, but God "gave the increaſe." His expreſſions are taken from huſbandry, or gardening, which is a particular branch of it. By an alluſion to theſe arts, he explains his ſubject in a manner level to the capacity of every thinking perſon. The huſbandman or gardener may manure, dig up and mellow the ſoil; he may ſow his ſeed, and dreſs his field with the greateſt diligence and care: but what a little way has he gone, or rather indeed he hath not ſo much as begun the great proceſs of growth and vegetation, that daily miracle, may I not call it, before our eyes. How many things muſt neceſſarily concur, which are beyond the reach of his power? the enlivening heat of the ſun, the refreſhing dews and rain from the bottles of heaven, are wholly under the direction and diſpoſal of the omnipotent Jehovah. Cannot he, when he will, make the heavens over your heads as braſs, and the earth under your feet as iron? Nay, not only ſo, but the power of growing in the ſeed, by ſtriking out its roots, and opening its bud, and the natural diſpoſition in the earth to nouriſh it, are derived not from any virtue inherent in the things themſelves, but only from that almighty word, "Let the earth "bring forth every tree bearing fruit, and every herb "bearing ſeed after its kind." Juſt ſo in that ſpiritual huſbandry, of which the apoſtle is ſpeaking, miniſters may ſow the good ſeed of the word of God, but it is his own prerogative to give it a regenerating and ſanctifying

efficacy, and make it productive of faith in the heart, and good works in the life. Ministers may continue to water the seed already sown, with suitable instructions and exhortations, and the diligent use of all those means which God hath appointed for the establishment and growth of believers: but it is only the influence of his own spirit that makes these means productive of the desired effect. Therefore the apostle concludes, in language drawn from the similitude, " So then neither is he that planteth " any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giv- " eth the increase."

This important truth, my brethren, is capable of a very full and clear proof from the sacred oracles. Every thing we find recorded there, concerning the mission of the prophets, and the success of their message, carries this truth as it were in its bosom. Nay, the great prophet of the church gives us this very view of his own ministry as the Son of man. John vi. 44, 45, " No man can come to " me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him : " and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in " the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. " Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned " of the Father, cometh unto me." You see that, to the commission which our Lord gives to his apostles, is annexed a promise of his presence and power to accompany their ministrations. Math. xxviii. 19, 20. " Go ye there- " fore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name " of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost, " teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have " commanded you : and lo I am with you alway, even to " the end of the world. Amen."

But instead of multiplying passages of scripture, I shall direct you to one, which will set this part of my argument in the clearest light. It is that passage which gives an account of the conversion of Lydia, recorded Acts xvi. 14. " And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, " of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard " us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to " the things that were spoken of Paul." Now if we attend to the circumstances of this conversion, we shall find

that if any thing could have been effectually done without the direct and immediate concurrence of the grace of God, it might have been expected here. The case was every way promising. The hearer was one who had renounced idolatry, and embraced the worship of the true God. She was, it is not improbable, a devout woman, so far as her knowledge reached; and wanted only to be instructed in the faith of Christ. Here was for a preacher the great apostle of the Gentiles. I need say no more to shew how well qualified he was to do his part; and yet we find that even in this most favorable case, the immediate concurrence of divine grace was necessary to complete the work. The Lord must by his own good Spirit open the heart of Lydia, else even the apostle Paul, with all his divine accomplishments, and a heart glowing with the warmest zeal for the glory of Christ, and the salvation of souls, will be but an unsuccessful preacher.

I need not make use of any separate arguments to convince you, that this holds equally true of the growth and comfort of believers, as of the conversion of sinners. Whether ministers are employed in planting or watering, the instrument is nothing; success flows only from God. Let me therefore request and beseech you to hear and adore the striking truth, a Paul or Apollos in the pulpit will be altogether unsuccessful without the almighty power and grace of God. The most clear and distinct illustration of divine truths, without inward and spiritual illumination, will leave the hearer in ignorance, or lead him into error. The most awful denunciations of a son of thunder, without divine power, will leave the sinner hardened, or even increase the seariedness of conscience. The most melting and tender application to the affections, without divine energy, will be treated with contempt and scorn. In one word, the most lively administration of ordinances, without the blessing from above, will be but in the language of the prophet, as a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts.

My brethren you may not only be convinced of this truth, because it is recorded in the word of God, but may see it daily exemplified in every part of the visible church. You may see the same ordinances acceptable, delightful,

and profitable to ſome; deſerted, deſpiſed and reſiſted by others. Under the very ſame adminiſtration, you may ſee ſome effectually perſuaded to turn to the living God, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the holy Ghoſt, and daily multiplied: ſome on the other hand caring for none of theſe things, but ſleeping in ſecurity, nay ſome whoſe corruptions are irritated, ſwelling with rage, contradicting and blaſpheming, all which is well deſcribed by the apoſtle Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16. "For we "are unto God a ſweet ſavor of Chriſt, in them that are "ſaved, and in them that periſh. To the one we are the "ſavor of death unto death; and to the other, the ſavor of "life unto life; and who is ſufficient for theſe things?"

3. The third and laſt obſervation I am to make for the illuſtration of this truth is, that ſucceſs in the goſpel depends wholly upon God, as he exerciſes much of his own ſovereignty in the manner of beſtowing it. He takes care, if I may ſpeak ſo, to ſhew that it is from himſelf, by the meaſure in which he proportions the ſucceſs to the nature and ſufficiency of the means he ſees proper to employ. All is from God, as you have already heard, becauſe the diſpoſing and commiſſioning his miniſters is originally his own work—again, becauſe however well qualified they may be, his own almighty agency is neceſſary to give them ſucceſs. But when there is a regular proportion always obſerved, between the means and the end, men are ready to overlook, or forget the great and firſt cauſe of all. For this reaſon he ſees it often meet to manifeſt his ſovereignty, in order to command our attention, by working without means, or by the weakeſt means, or even contrary to means, and blaſting the effect of thoſe that were moſt excellent and promiſing in human judgment. Juſt as the beautiful and regular order of the natural world, the mutual dependance of one part upon, and its ſubſerviency to another, is a proof of the wiſdom and omnipotence of the Creator. Yet he ſees it neceſſary ſometimes, to interpoſe, in an extraordinary way, and to controul the courſe of nature, to ſhew that it is abſolutely at his command.

Remember, however, my brethren, that in carrying on the work of the goſpel, God uſually proportions the ſucceſs

to the propriety and ſufficiency of the means. When he has much work to do, he commonly raiſes up ſome perſons eminently qualified; he draws from his quiver ſome poliſhed ſhafts, to pierce the ranks of oppoſing hoſts. Yet he often preſents to our view ſuch circumſtances as ſerve to ſhow the dependance of all means upon himſelf. When the goſpel was firſt preached, the apoſtles were indeed fully fitted and furniſhed for their work; but it was by a miracle. They were originally poor illiterate fiſhermen, quite unequal in themſelves to the aſtoniſhing undertaking, of producing a revolution in the ſtate of religion, and the ſentiments of mankind over the whole earth. Such perſons ſeem to have been employed for this wiſe purpoſe, "that our faith might not ſtand in the wiſdom of man, "but in the power of God." I have often conſidered this matter with a mixture of reverence and admiration.

That proper reſpect might ſtill be had to the qualifications of miniſters, and that none might be juſtified in pouring contempt on human ſcience, the apoſtle Paul, a man of eminent learning and ability, was the moſt active, uſeful and ſucceſsful of all the apoſtles; and one third part at leaſt, of the whole canon of the New Teſtament, was written by him. At the ſame time there were ſuch circumſtances in his calling and converſion, as made him one of the moſt illuſtrious monuments of the ſovereignty and riches of divine grace, that any age has produced.

In the ſame manner, we ſee every day the cleareſt proofs of the power, wiſdom, and ſovereignty of God. We ſee that he many times gives extraordinary and ſenſible aſſiſtance to thoſe whom he employs in his own work. So that they both perceive and confeſs that it is not they, but the grace of God, that is with them. Sometimes thoſe of very moderate, or even of the weakeſt natural abilities, have an unction from the holy one, and by their piety and diligence become workmen that need not be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. This may be conſidered as an accompliſhment of what Iſaiah ſays of himſelf, Iſaiah l. 4. "And the Lord God, hath given me "the tongue of the learned, that I ſhould know how to "ſpeak a word in ſeaſon to him that is weary." See alſo

the expreſſion of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xxv. 14. "The ſe-"cret of the Lord is with them that fear him: and he "will ſhew them is covenant." Our Lord promiſes to his diſciples extraordinary aſſiſtance, in time of extraordinary trials and ſuffering, Luke xxi. 14, 15. "Settle it "therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before, what ye "ſhall anſwer. For I will give you a mouth and wiſdom, "which all your adverſaries ſhall not be able to gainſay, "nor reſiſt." And to name one more paſſage, it is propheſied by Iſaiah of the goſpel times, chapter xxxii. 4. "The heart alſo of the raſh ſhall underſtand knowledge, "and the tongue of the ſtammérers ſhall be ready to ſpeak "plainly."

In a former part of this diſcourſe, I have admitted that gifts may be conſidered as more neceſſary to the being of the miniſtry, than even grace itſelf. Yet certainly true religion in the heart, is of far greater importance to the ſucceſs and efficacy of the miniſtry, than eminence or gifts. It ſeems often the very purpoſe of divine providence, to pour contempt upon unſanctified talents. The humble paſtor of meaner rank, who loves his maſter, his work, and his people, ſhall often have many ſeals of his miniſtry, while the perſon of ſuperior parts is urged by ambitious views into the unprofitable paths of worldly honors, or inſtigated by unmortified paſſion, to mar the ſucceſs of his miniſtry, by launching out into the tempeſtuous ocean of political conteſt and faction. But beſides the unfruitfulneſs of unſanctified talents, there are alſo many proofs of the ſovereignty of God, in refuſing his bleſſing, and making the beſt miniſters in a great meaſure unprofitable to a people, in righteous judgment for their paſt ſins. Even Iſaiah could ſay, chap. liii. 1, "Who hath believed "our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord reveal-"ed?" Our bleſſed Lord himſelf upbraided many of the cities where his mighty works were done, becauſe of their unbelief, and indeed upon many of his hearers his miniſtry, inſtead of a ſaving, had a hardening effect, John iii. 19. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into "the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light, "becauſe their deeds were evil." The ſame thing is elſe-

where reſolved into the lively and righteous judgment of God. John xii. 39, 40. "Therefore they could not be-"lieve, becauſe that Eſaias ſaid again, he hath blinded "their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they ſhould "not ſee with their eyes, nor underſtand with their heart, "and be converted, and I ſhould heal them."

I proceed now to make ſome practical improvement of what hath been ſaid. And in the

Firſt place, a deep and lively impreſſion of the truth I have endeavored to illuſtrate and ſupport, will be to thoſe who preach the goſpel, an excellent preſervative from many temptations. It will preſerve them from truſting in themſelves, it will keep them ſtill looking upward, and engage them to maintain a continual intercourſe with the Father of lights, and the author of every good and perfect gift. It will alſo, particularly be an excellent mean of preſerving them from the dangerous extremes of oſtentation and ſloth. Oh, how unbecoming a miniſter, is a vain-glorious diſplay of human art, burning incenſe to his own vanity, and preaching himſelf, when he is called to preach Chriſt Jeſus the Lord? It is no wonder that God ſhould in his providence, pour diſgrace and diſappointment on that miniſtry, that is carried on in ſuch a manner, as to aim more at promoting the credit of the ſervant, than the honor of the maſter. On the other hand, with what countenance can they look up to God for a bleſſing, who have been at no pains to qualify themſelves for his ſervice. As oſtentation provokes the divine jealouſy, ſo negligence is diſobedience, preſumption, and preciſely what the ſcripture calls tempting God. I would never deſire to be conſidered, as one who would encourage men, to ruſh into a pulpit unprepared, and diſgrace their honorable calling, by rude, undigeſted, diſorderly effuſions, or ſuch mean, ſlovenly, indecent language, as lays the hearers under the ſtrongeſt temptation, to treat it with an inſolence of indignation and contempt. Let me commend this, to the attention of ſuch young perſons, as may have an eye to the ſacred office. My dear fellow ſtudents, how happy they, who can unite together, the ſimplicity of the goſpel, and the dignity of the pulpit; who are on the

one hand, not ashamed of the cross, and the ignominy that attends it; and on the other, as devoted servants, are resolved to comply with the counsel given by the apostle Paul to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. "Meditate upon "these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy pro- "fiting may appear unto all. Take heed unto thyself, and "unto thy doctrine; continue in them; for in doing "this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear "thee."

2. A deep impression of the truth I have endeavored to illustrate, will be an excellent preservative to the hearers of the gospel, from many temptations, which often render their attendance on ordinances, as fruitless or pernicious. It will purify their views and motives, in attending on ordinances. It will deliver them from a sinful and unreasonable attachment to men, and carry them more immediately into the presence of the living God: it will save them from that giddy, unsettled disposition, of running with unbounded curiosity, from one to another, not that they may be built up in holiness and comfort, but that their imagination and fancy may be gratified. It will preserve them from hearing the gospel, merely as critics, in order to pass their judgment on the soundness or ability of their teachers, which, with whatever pride or self-sufficiency it may be done, is as empty and unprofitable a manner of hearing, as any that can be named. It will settle their esteem of, and attachment to their pastors, upon the best, and most immoveable foundation. They will then love them for their work's sake, they will love them for their master's sake, they will love them for their own soul's sake, and for their subserviency to their daily edification. It will carry them to the throne of grace, and incline them to make continual and fervent supplication to God, for his assistance and countenance to his ministers, in his own work; and this will bring them to his house, in the best and happiest temper for hearing with profit: in one word, it will make them, in a great measure, lose view of the creature, and hear the gospel, not "as the word of man, but as it is indeed, and in truth, "the word of God."

3. Let me intreat the prayers of this congregation, for the miniſters of the goſpel in general, and for us, who miniſter among you in holy things, that we may be abundantly qualified, for the diſcharge of our important truſt in all its parts. The apoſtle Paul, though extraordinarily called, though ſingularly qualified, and eminently aſſiſted, never fails to aſk the prayers and interceſſion of the faithful, in his behalf, Eph. vi. 19. "And "for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may "open my mouth boldly, to make known the myſtery of "the goſpel." After this approved example, I hope you will forgive me, if I put in a particular claim in my own behalf, for your intereſt at the throne of grace. I make no merit at all, of having left country, and kindred, and connexions of the deareſt kind, in order to ſerve the intereſt of the church of Chriſt, in this part of the globe: for I conſider with pleaſure, the oneneſs of his body, and the extent of the catholic church, that there ſhall come from the eaſt, and from the weſt, and from the north, and from the ſouth, and ſet down with Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their father. Could we but think as we ought, of the great removal, which we are making from time to time, into an eternal ſtate; the removal of our bodies, and the change of our ſcene of ſervice from Europe to America, would appear altogether unworthy of notice. But when I conſider the reſpect and affection, ſo much above my deſert, that have been ſhewn to me, ſince my arrival in this place, and the teſtimonies of joy and ſatisfaction, which have been given by all ranks, I am filled with the greateſt concern: I ſay I am filled with the greateſt concern, becauſe it plainly implies an expectation of duty and ſervice from me, which I fear I ſhall be ill able to perform. Let me therefore, on ſo juſt a foundation, not ſolicit only, but demand an intereſt in your prayers. Pray that an all-ſufficient God, may give ſtrength from above, and may pour down his bleſſing on the public inſtitution in this place, which upon the beſt information, I think I may ſay has been founded in faith; and therefore, why ſhould not we continue to ſerve it in hope? Pray that ſucceſs may attend the miniſtry of the goſ-

pel in this place; and that if it pleaſe God, the eſteem and affection ſhewn to me, by all to whom I ſtand now related, may not be leſs than it is, for I have not the leaſt reaſon to deſire, nor indeed the courage to hope, that it can poſſibly be greater. Once more, pray that my beloved charge, whom I left in Scotland, and will never forget, may, by the ſpecial conduct of divine Providence, be ſupplied with a faithful paſtor, who may feed them with knowledge and underſtanding.

4. In the laſt place, ſuffer me to conclude, by addreſſing a few words to thoſe in this aſſembly, who are, or who have reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves to be in a ſtate of diſtance from God. I know that he himſelf only can change your hearts. Yet he hath given it in charge to his miniſters, that you ſhould receive warning. And be aſſured, that if you deſpiſe the meſſage, if you trample upon the divine mercy, and reſiſt the Spirit of God, when pleading with you in his word, or ſtriving and bearing witneſs againſt you in your conſciences; your everlaſting perdition will lie entirely at your own door. God will be juſt when he ſpeaketh, and clear when he judgeth. Conſider, I beſeech you, that there is certainly, to all of us here preſent, one thing that is needful. It ſignifies very little, whether you paſs the little uncertain time that you ſhall yet be in the body, in abundance or in penury, in honor or in ſhame, compared to what ſhall become of you forever. Lay theſe things to heart, then, in this day of your merciful viſitation. There is but one way to eſcape: "Believe in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that be-"lieving you may have life through his name."

END OF SECOND VOLUME.

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